YUMEKUI KENBUN

NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR

STORY AND ART BY SHIN MASHIBA

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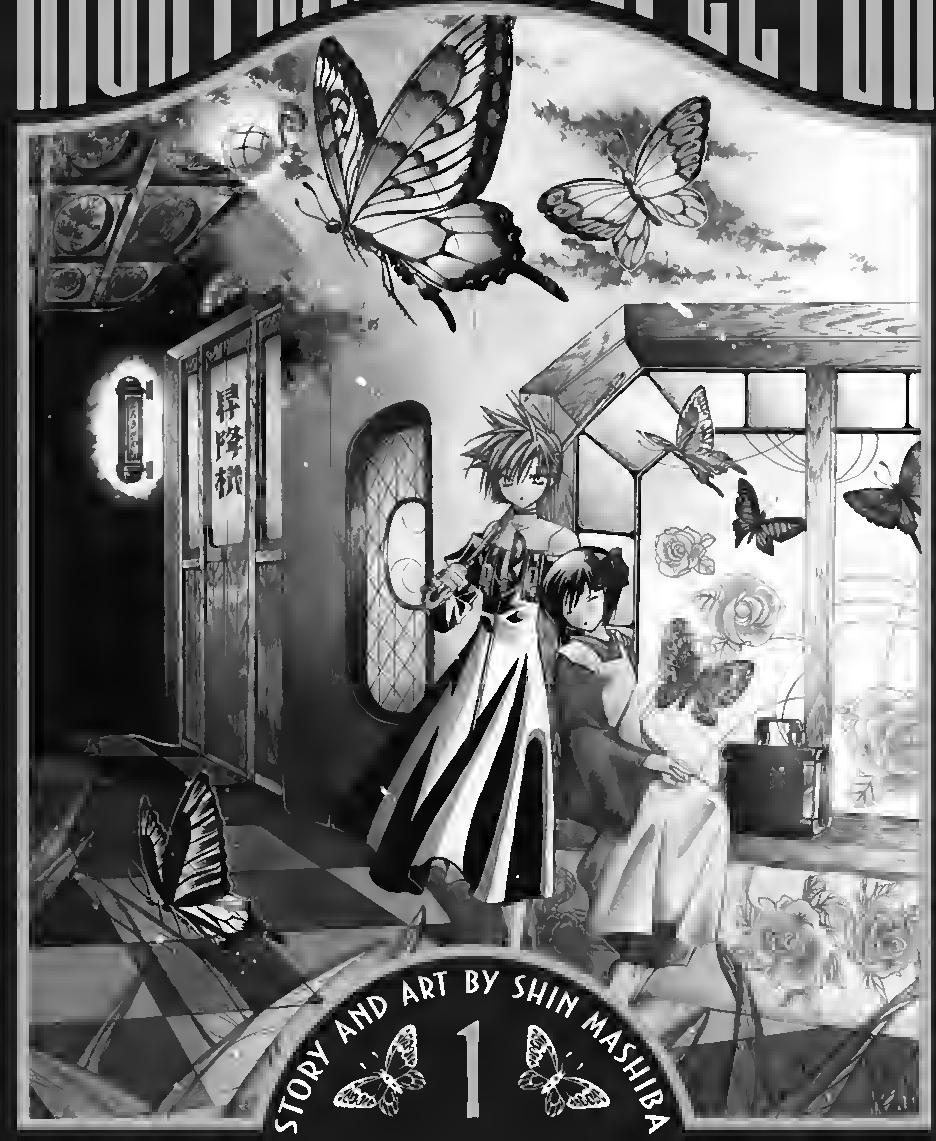
NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR



STORY AND ART BY SHIN MASHIBA

1

LOST THINGS

YUMEKUI KENBUN

NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR

CONTENTS

The First Night... The Descending Stairs 003

The Second Night... Writing 029

The Third Night... Lost Things 053

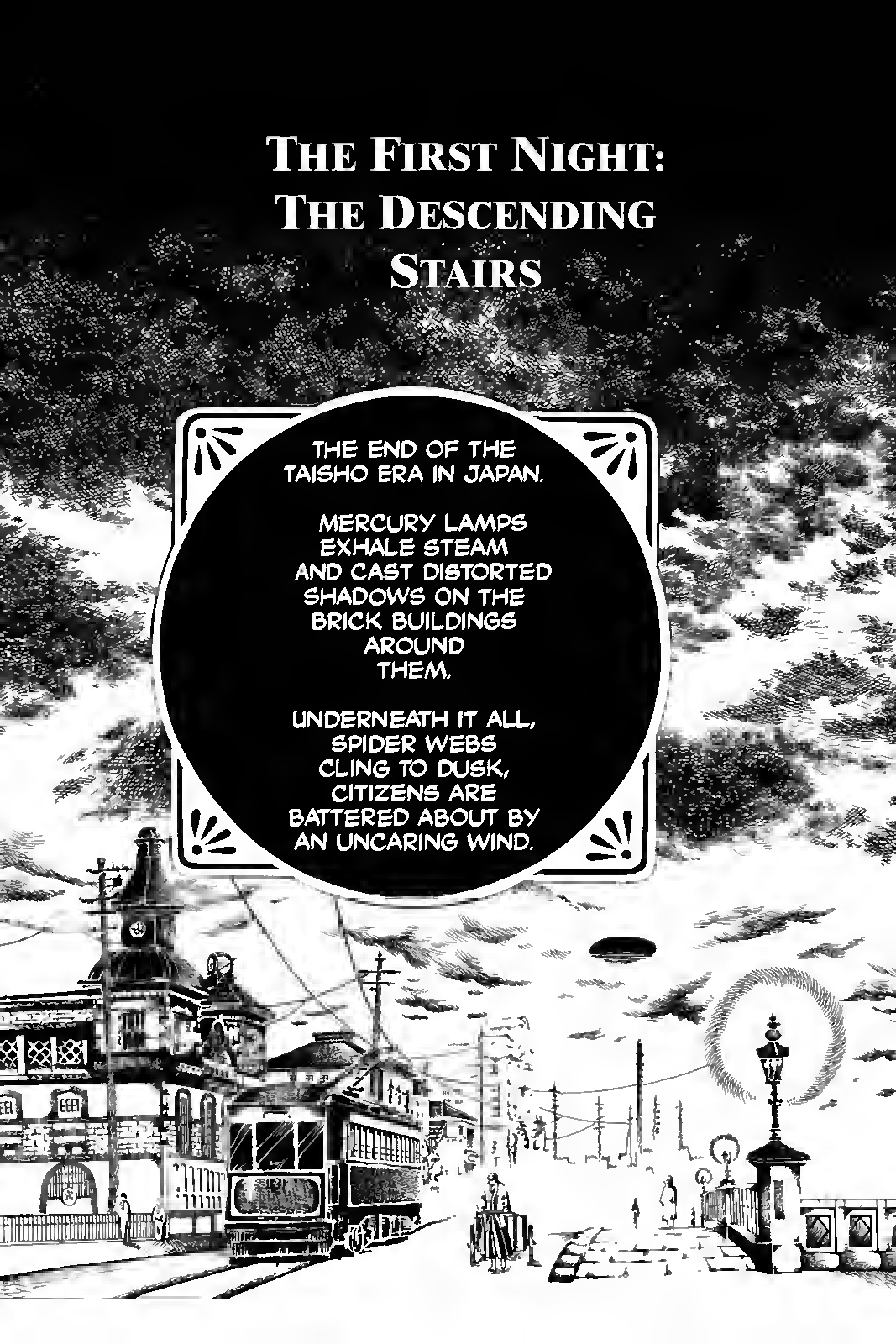
The Fourth Night... On the Brink of Death 079

The Fifth Night... Characters 103

The Sixth Night... The Silver Screen 131

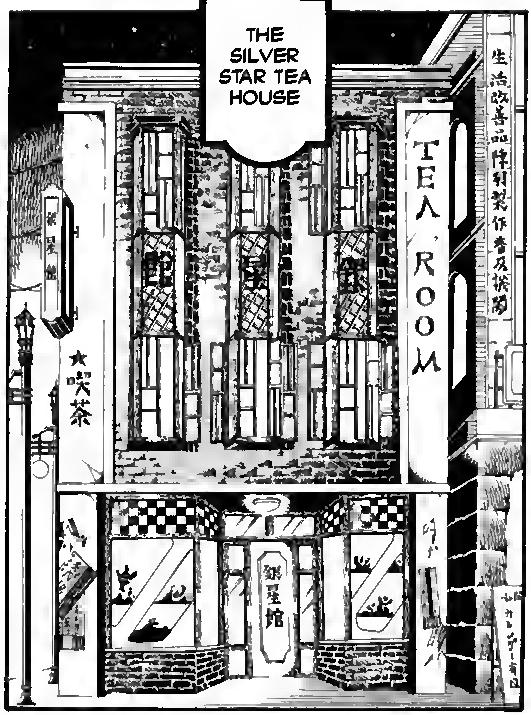
The Seventh Night... Facing Mirrors (Part One) 155

The First Night: The Descending Stairs


THE END OF THE TAISHO ERA IN JAPAN.
MERCURY LAMPS EXHALE STEAM AND CAST DISTORTED SHADOWS ON THE BRICK BUILDINGS AROUND THEM.
UNDERNEATH IT ALL, SPIDER WEBS CLING TO DUSK, CITIZENS ARE BATTERED ABOUT BY AN UNCARING WIND.

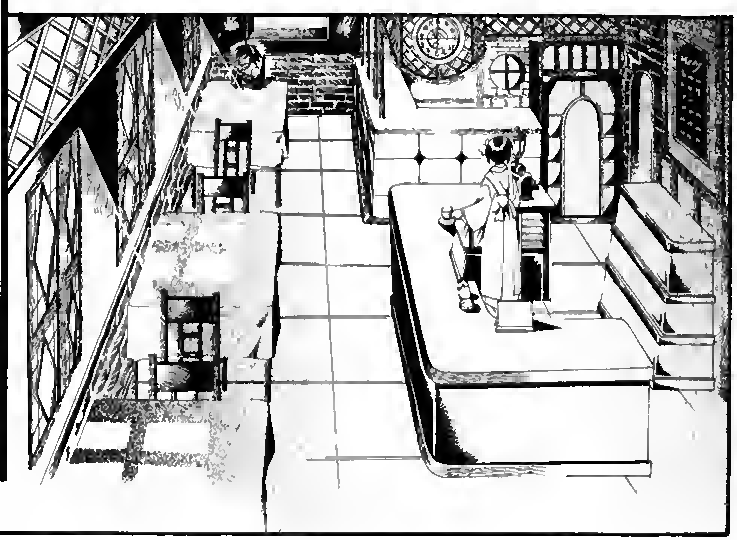
ON ONE SMALL CORNER STANDS A SHOP COVERED IN PERPETUAL DARKNESS.

THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE



THE UNFORTUNATES WHO NEED HELP FACING THEIR DOUBTS AND FEARS COME HERE.

THEY SEEK AID FROM ONE WHO IS NO LONGER HUMAN.



HIS NAME IS HIRUKO.
HE IS THE NIGHT-MARE INSPEC-TOR
HE IS A BAKU HE EATS DREAMS
THE SILVER STAR CLIENTELE IS HIS AND HIS ALONE. HE WALKS WITH THEM IN THEIR DREAMS AND INVESTIGATES THEIR NIGHTMARES.

THIS PLACE IS SO GLOOMY.
RESPECTABLE CUSTOMERS WON'T SET FOOT IN HERE.
WANT SOME FOOD, HIRUKO?
BEING YOUR OWN BEST CUSTOMER AGAIN?
YEAH, WELL, I WONDER WHOSE FAULT THAT IS?
I HAVE NO INTEREST IN HUMAN FOOD.
YOU CAN'T EVEN JOKE?
YOU CAN'T EVEN DRINK A CUP OF COFFEE?
IT'S GOT TO BE FRIGHTFULLY DULL BEING BAKU.
DULL? WELL...
THAT DEPENDS ON THE NIGHTMARE.
I WONDER WHAT KIND OF DREAM YOU'LL EAT TONIGHT.
DING

PLEASE!
OH! WELCO—
I NEED YOU TO CONDUCT A FUNERAL FOR MY MISTRESS!
A FUNERAL ?!
YOU'RE IN THE WRONG PLACE, KID. YOU NEED A TEMPLE.
HIRUKO!
YOU ARE HIRUKO, AREN'T YOU?
THERE HAVE BEEN LOTS OF RUMORS...
THEY SAY HIRUKO CAN ENTER A NIGHTMARE AND RELEASE YOU FROM YOUR SUFFERING.
SOUNDS LIKE YOU'RE IN THE RIGHT PLACE AFTER ALL.

MY NIGHTMARE ...
...IN EXCHANGE FOR YOUR NIGHTMARE.
IT'LL BE ALL RIGHT. I'M SURE HIRUKO WILL HELP YOU...
IT'S ALWAYS THE SAME.
SHE JUST ASSUMES!
...IS THE MISTRESS IN MY DREAM.
THE PERSON I NEED THE SERVICE FOR..
BUT IN MY NIGHTMARE HER BODY REMAINS IN THE MANSION
MY MISTRESS DIED OF ILLNESS A LONG TIME AGO.

IN THE DREAM, I AM HER SERVANT...
I MIND THE GATE.
WHERE IS THIS PLACE?
ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN. MY MISTRESS OUTLIVED BOTH HER PARENTS AND THERE WAS NO OTHER FAMILY.
MY MISTRESS IS NOBLE, FAR BEYOND MY REACH.
...

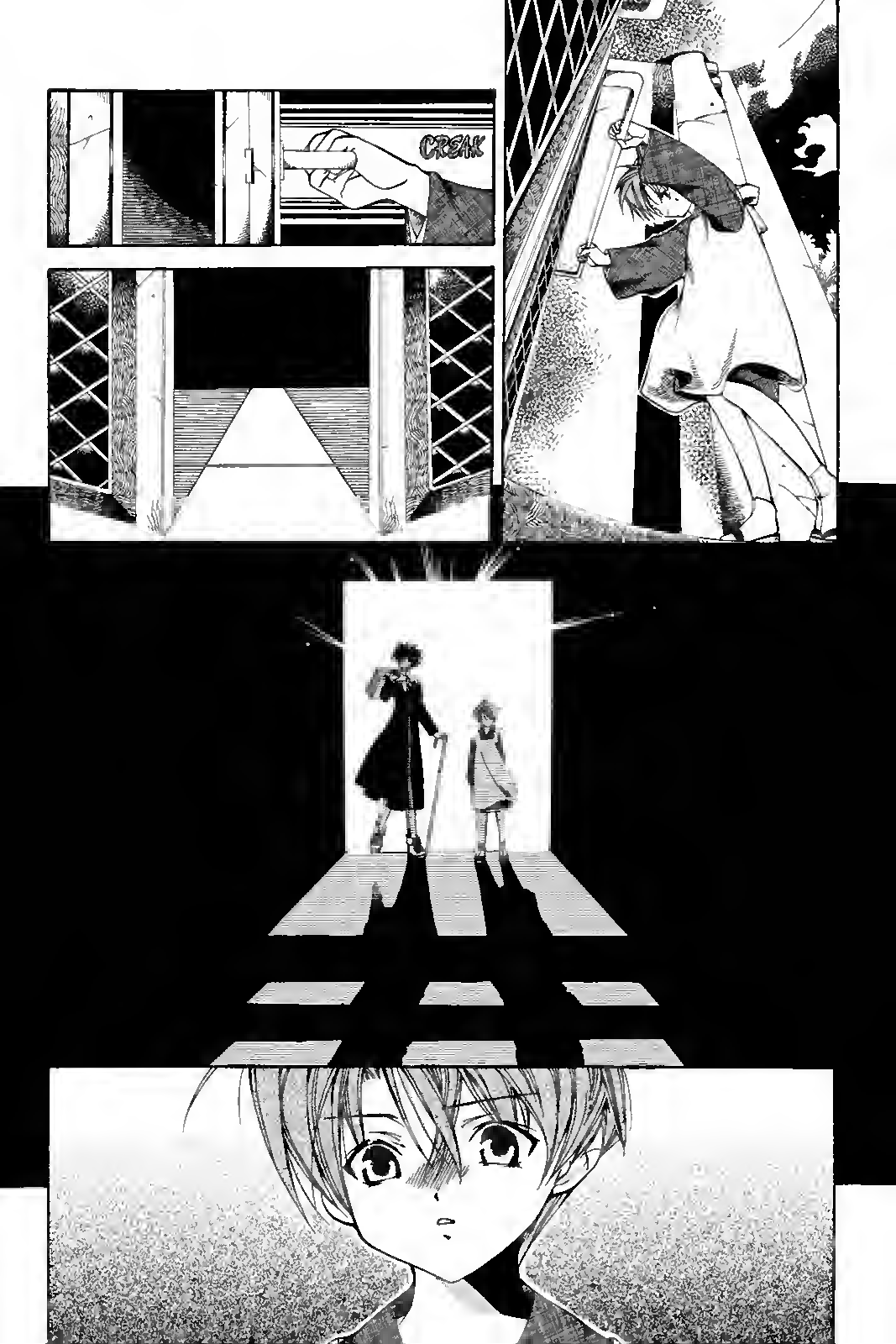
IT'S ONLY A DREAM, BUT IT'S HORRIBLE... I FEEL LIKE SOMETHING'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO ME TOO!
PLEASE HELP ME! I CAN'T JUST LEAVE HER THERE LIKE THAT!
NO.
SOMETHING WRONG?
FAR, BEYOND MY REACH...
NO. I DON'T DO KIDS. SORRY.
IT'S UNREQUITED LOVE! HELP HIM, HIRUKO.
HMPH. YOU'RE CLEARLY OBSESSED.
SLP
LET'S GO, KID.
FINE. IF I DO IT, WILL YOU STOP TALKING TO ME ALTOGETHER?
YAY!
SCOOT
TOO MUCH TROUBLE.
WHY NOT? IT'S JUST A FUNERAL.
WHAT?! ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS ENTER HIS DREAM AND PRAY A LITTLE. YOU'RE A LAYABOUT!

SLEEP NOW... LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.
SO... TIRED..
OH...
Come back safe now.

THIS PLACE ...
IT'S MY NIGHTMARE!
IT IS. I JUST PUT YOU TO SLEEP.
MY CANE CAN DO THAT.
NOW, AS SOON AS WE'VE SETTLED THINGS, THE CANE WILL COLLECT YOUR NIGHTMARE FOR ME.

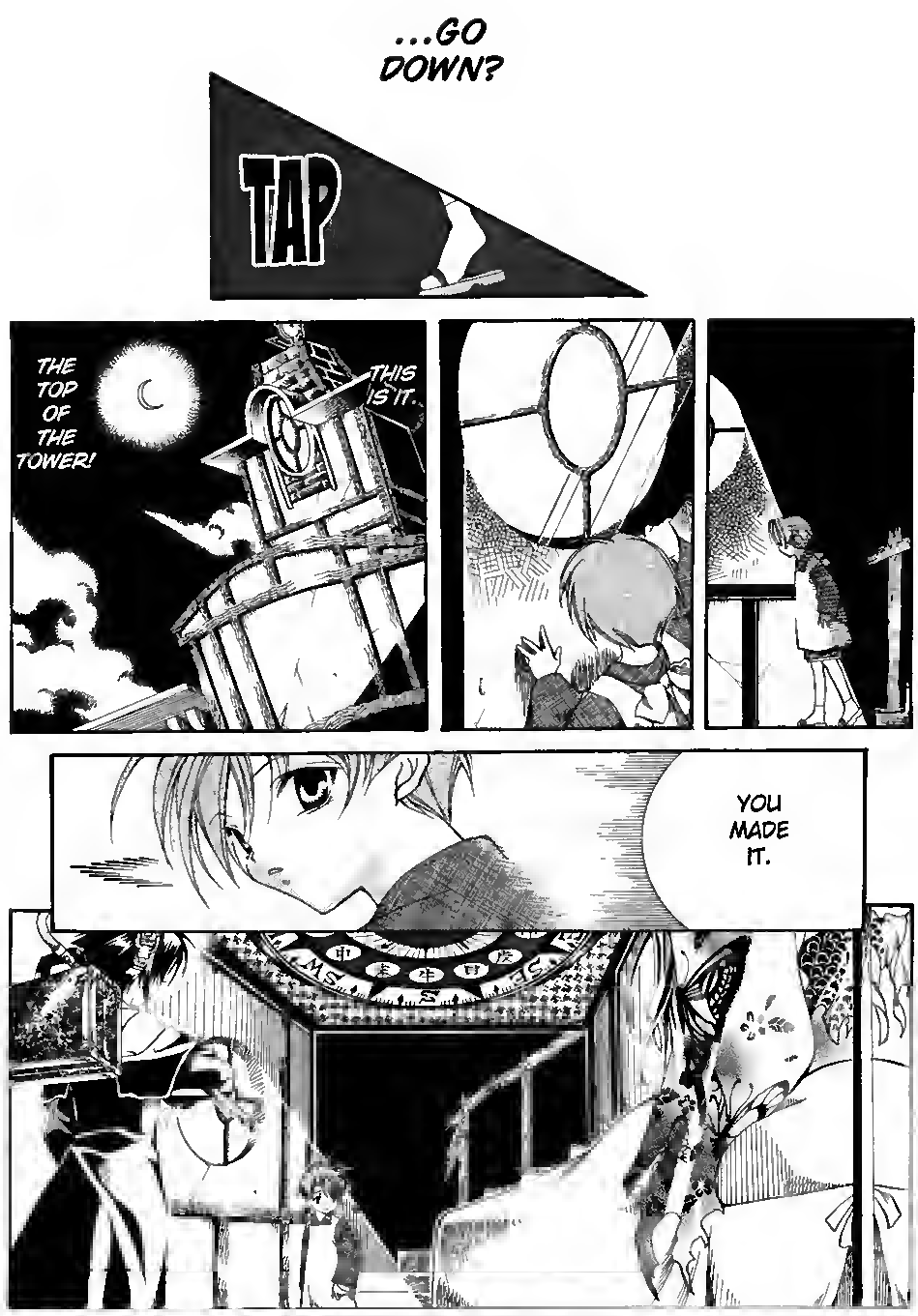
UM...
I'LL LEAVE IT TO YOU.
HER BODY IS AT THE TOP OF THAT TOWER.
I KNEW YOU WOULD BE DIFFICULT.
LOOK, YOU HAVE TO DO IT YOURSELF. I JUST COME ALONG.
I CAN'T!
I'M JUST A GATEKEEPER..
YOU'RE JUST AN IDIOT.
HUH?!
EVEN IF IT'S A NIGHTMARE, IT'S STILL YOUR DREAM.
YOU CAN DO WHATEVER YOU WANT.
YOU'RE FREE.
IN A DREAM, YOU CAN DO WHATEVER YOU WISH.

I'VE ...
I'M.. FREE?
I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO HOLD HER... JUST ONCE.
I'VE ALWAYS WANTED...
I SEE.


CREAK

SHE'S IN THIS MANSION, AND WHEN WE OPENED THE DOOR IT LED US TO *THESE STAIRS*.
SO THESE STAIRS MUST LEAD TO *HER*.
CORRECT?
YOU SAID SHE WAS AT THE TOP OF THE TOWER. SO LET'S GET UP THERE.
HUH?!
CLACK
CLACK
HOLD ON! I KNOW THAT THIS IS MY NIGHTMARE...
CLACK
... BUT ...
IF MY MISTRESS IS AT THE TOP OF THE TOWER, WHY DO THESE STEPS GO *DOWN*?
CLACK
WELL ...

I BETTER HURRY.
TAP
...
HIRUKO ...?
BUT ...
YOU KNOW, I NEVER GOT YOUR NAME.
WHAT ARE YOU ANYWAY?
WHAT AM I?
HUH?!
I'M ...
TAP
BUT THESE STAIRS...
TAP
WHY DO I HAVE TO...
TAP


...GO DOWN?
TAP
THE TOP OF THE TOWER!
THIS IS IT.
YOU MADE IT.

YOU'RE HERE. GO AHEAD.

PLEASE...
BE AT PEACE.
TIME TO WAKE UP NOW.

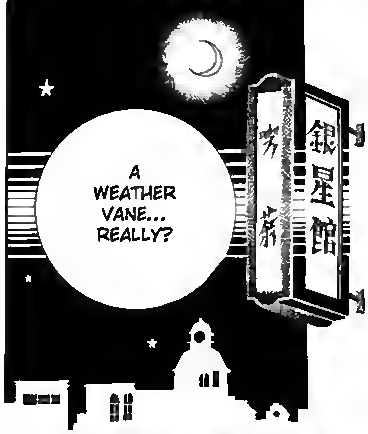
CHIRP
CREAK
WHERE AM I?
CHIRP
THAT'S RIGHT...
CREAK
CREAK
I'D COMPLETELY FORGOTTEN.
I'M THE MANSION'S...

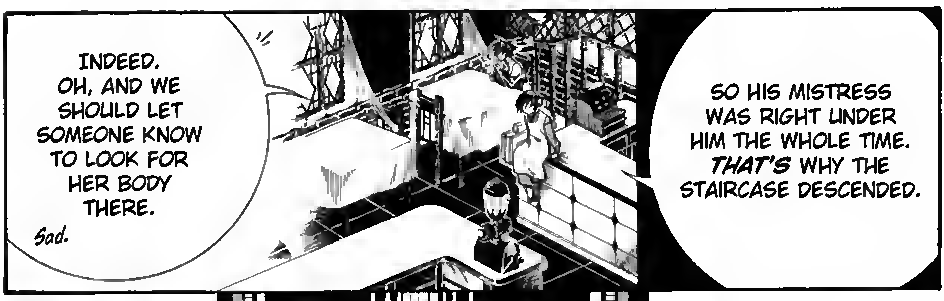
YOU AWAKE?
YOUR MISTRESS'S REMAINS *WERE* THERE. IT WASN'T JUST YOUR DREAM.
REALLY?
IN MY DREAM I WAS A BOY, BUT IN REAL LIFE I'M JUST A WEATHER VANE... NOT HUMAN AT ALL.
MY MISTRESS REALLY WAS BEYOND MY REACH.
SEE?
BUT I STILL GET A NIGHTMARE, THANKS TO YOU.
WHOOSH
MY NIGHTMARE ...

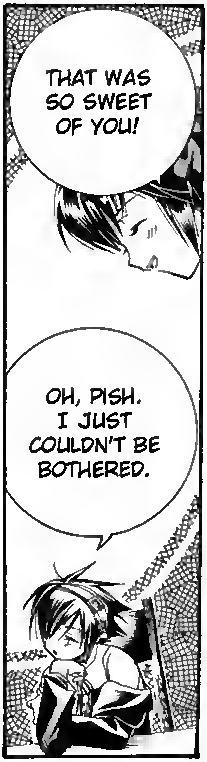
I WONDER WHEN IT ALL BEGAN.
WHEN DID I REALIZE I HAD FEELINGS FOR HER?
WAS IT THE DAY I STOPPED SEEING HER?
THIS IS TOO STRANGE ...

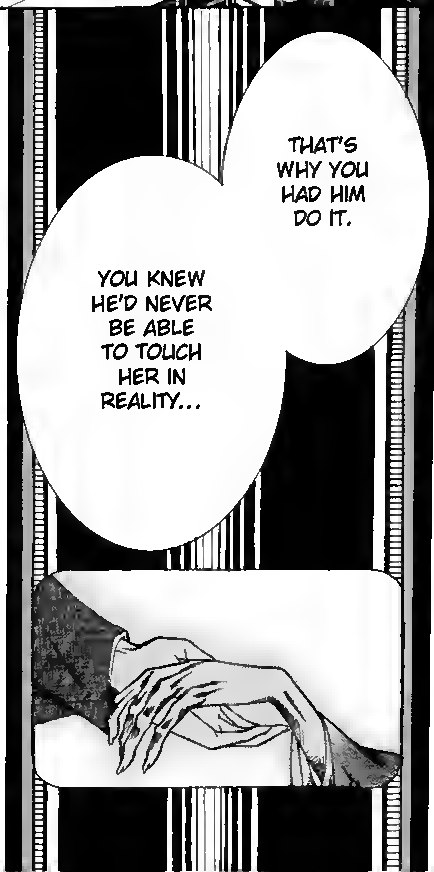
IT'S A LITTLE OVERRIPE.
YOU'VE BEEN SUFFERING A LONG TIME HAVEN'T YOU?
...
I DID GET TO HOLD HER, DIDN'T I?
BUT I...

I AM YOUR WITNESS.
PLEASE LOOK AFTER MY MISTRESS...
...HAPPY.
CREAK
CREAK
...TO DREAM OF HER...
NOW, I WISH ...
CREAK ... CREAK ... CREAK ... CREAK ... CREAK ...


銀星館
A WEATHER VANE... REALLY?


INDEED. OH, AND WE SHOULD LET SOMEONE KNOW TO LOOK FOR HER BODY THERE.
Sad.
SO HIS MISTRESS WAS RIGHT UNDER HIM THE WHOLE TIME. THAT'S WHY THE STAIRCASE DESCENDED.

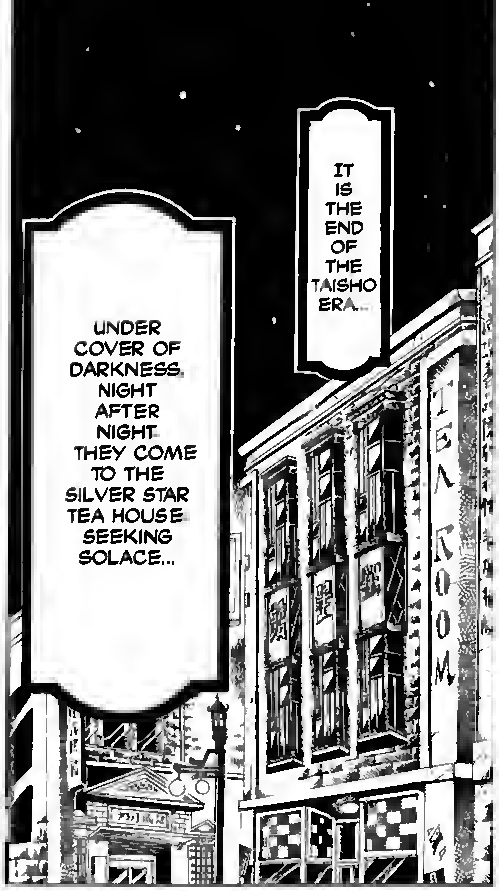

THAT WAS SO SWEET OF YOU!
OH, PISH. I JUST COULDN'T BE BOTHERED.

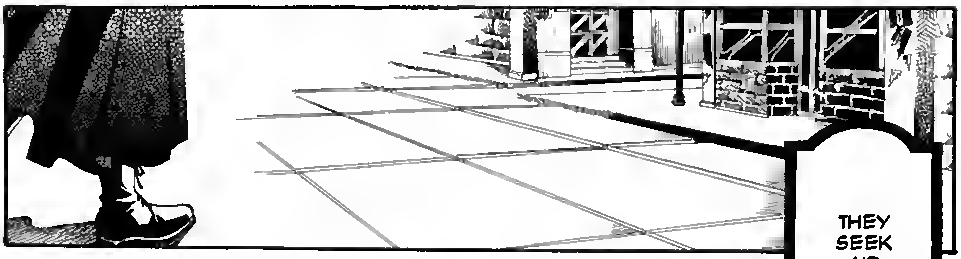

THAT'S WHY YOU HAD HIM DO IT.
YOU KNEW HE'D NEVER BE ABLE TO TOUCH HER IN REALITY...

HIRUKO ...
YOU KNEW THAT THAT KID WAS THE WEATHER VANE DIDN'T YOU?

HOW WAS THE NIGHTMARE?
BETTER THAN MY COFFEE?
IT WASN'T BAD.
BESIDES ...
IT'S NOT OFTEN I GET TO TASTE THE DREAM OF A WEATHER VANE.

THE SECOND NIGHT: WRITING


IT IS THE END OF THE TAISHO ERA...
UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS, NIGHT AFTER NIGHT THEY COME TO THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE SEEKING SOLACE...
TEA ROOM



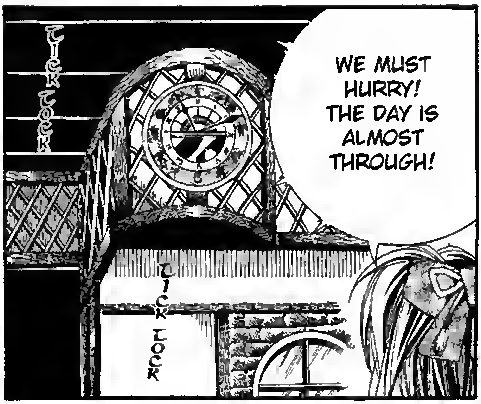
MY ONLY CONCERN IS MY SUSTENANCE.
THAT IS FOR THE CUSTOMER TO DECIDE.
TICK TOCK
TICK TOCK
YOU'LL CONTINUE, WON'T YOU?
DONG
DONG
DONG
DONG
DONG
TICK

DONG
DONG
DONG
SWWNK

Uhh?
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
...
SLUMP
I KNEW IT...
AH!
OOW...
ALL THE TIME ...?
OH MY, YES. HAPPENS ALL THE TIME.
IS IT SO DANGEROUS HERE?
MM. "I KNEW IT," YOU SAID. WHAT DID YOU MEAN BY THAT?
IF YOU'VE COME TO SEE HIRUKO, YOU'RE IN THE RIGHT PLACE.

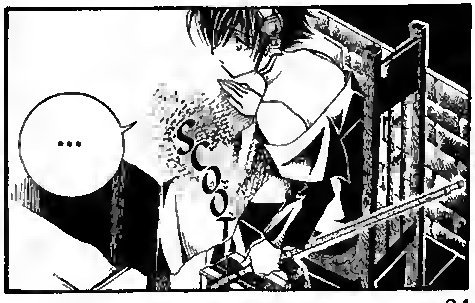
I BEG YOU...
IF WHAT THEY SAY IS TRUE...
THEY SAY YOU RESCUE PEOPLE FROM TORMENT IN EXCHANGE FOR THEIR DREAMS!
INDEED.
HIRUKO... THE BAKU...
REWRITE IT...?
CLICK
PLEASE REWRITE MY NIGHTMARE!

COME BACK SAFE NOW!

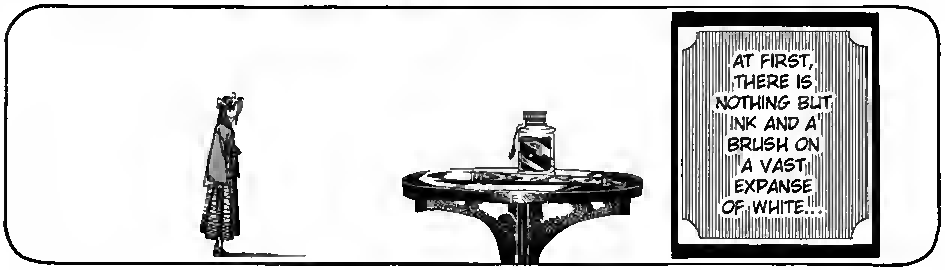

TICK TOCK
TICK TOCK
WE MUST HURRY! THE DAY IS ALMOST THROUGH!

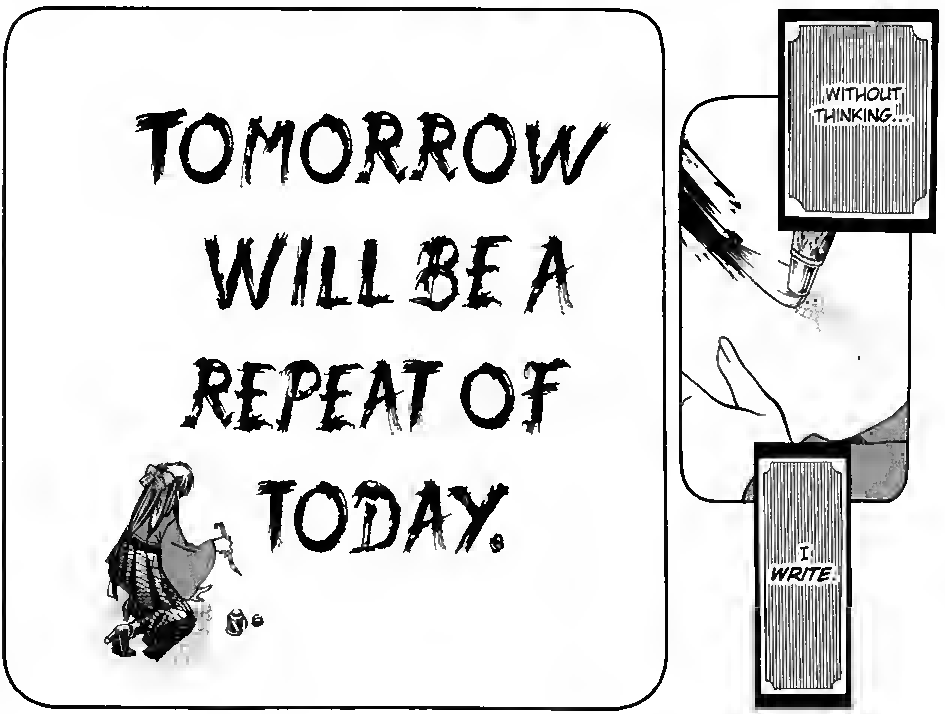
THERE IS SOMETHING I MUST SHOW YOU...
WE'LL GO TO MY PLACE. WE CAN TALK ON THE WAY.

MY NAME IS CHIDORI NUNOME...


...
SCOOT

I HAD BEGUN TO TIRE OF MY EVERYDAY ROUTINE. I FOUND SCHOOL *DULL*...
THAT'S WHEN THE DREAMS BEGAN.


AT FIRST, THERE IS NOTHING BUT INK AND A BRUSH ON A VAST EXPANSE OF WHITE...

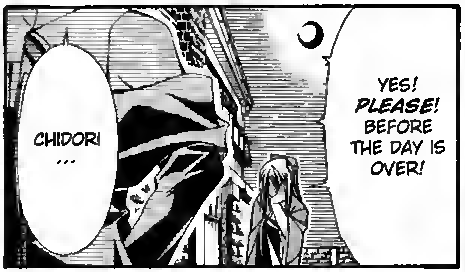

TOMORROW WILL BE A REPEAT OF TODAY.
WITHOUT THINKING...
I *WRITE*.

...AND THE NEXT DAY IS JUST AS EXPECTED.
EVERY NIGHT I FACED THAT WHITE SPACE ...
AND EVERY NIGHT I WROTE THE SAME THING.
THE SAME DREAM, THE SAME DAY OVER AND OVER AGAIN!
I COULDN'T DO IT ANYMORE ...
SO LAST NIGHT, I DARED MYSELF TO WRITE SOMETHING NEW.

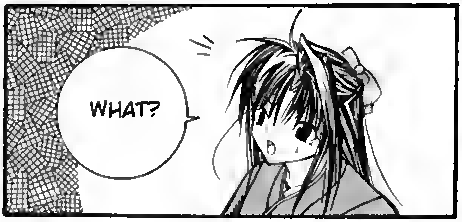
TOMORROW I WILL STAB SOMEONE.

...AND SOMETHING DID.
I HOPED THAT SOMETHING WOULD CHANGE...
...HAS BECOME A HELLISH NIGHTMARE.
WHAT STARTED AS A DREAM..
WAH!
IT ALTERED YOUR REALITY.
AND EVENTUALLY ...
YOUR NIGHTMARE FED ON THE IMPOTENCE THAT YOU FELT IN YOUR DAILY ROUTINE...

AND THIS IS WHY YOU ASK ME TO *REWRITE* YOUR NIGHTMARE?


YES! *PLEASE!* BEFORE THE DAY IS OVER!
CHIDORI ...

WE'RE HERE.


WHAT?

NO!
I DON'T WANT TO BE A MURDERER!

HOW DO YOU KNOW WHERE I LIVE?!
GASP
...
Y- YES, OF COURSE...
HOW ...?
I AM A BAKU.
CLICK
THIS IS WHAT I WANTED YOU TO SEE.

IT'S JUST THE WAY MY LIFE WAS BEFORE ALL THIS.
YOUR WATCH IS WELL-WORN...
YES.
I LIVED EVERY DAY THAT WAY.
...AND COME EVENING, MY WATCH HANDS AND I EACH RETURNED TO OUR STARTING POSITIONS.
EVERY MORNING I WENT DOWN THE SAME PATH...
THE HANDS OF MY WATCH WOULD FOREVER TRAVEL THE SAME CIRCUIT... JUST LIKE ME.
BUT ...

IT WAS RIGHT!
EVEN THOUGH IT WAS MONO-TONOUS...
LIKE THIS WATCH. I HAVE A FAMILIAR TOMORROW.
MY PROPER PLACE IS INSIDE THAT PATTERN ...
DO YOU UNDER-STAND?!
HEH
YOU GOT THE CHANGE YOU CRAVED ...
ONLY TO DISCOVER THAT THE MONOTONY OF YOUR ROUTINE...
WAS THE ONLY WAY YOU COULD FEEL SAFE.

...
REWRITE THE SENTENCE IN MY DREAM AND RESCUE ME.
PLEASE HURRY!
OH, 15 MINUTES LEFT.
CAN'T YOU DO IT?
NO... I DON'T TRUST MY OWN HANDS TO MAKE ANY MORE CHANGES.
CLASH

SLEEP NOW...
LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.

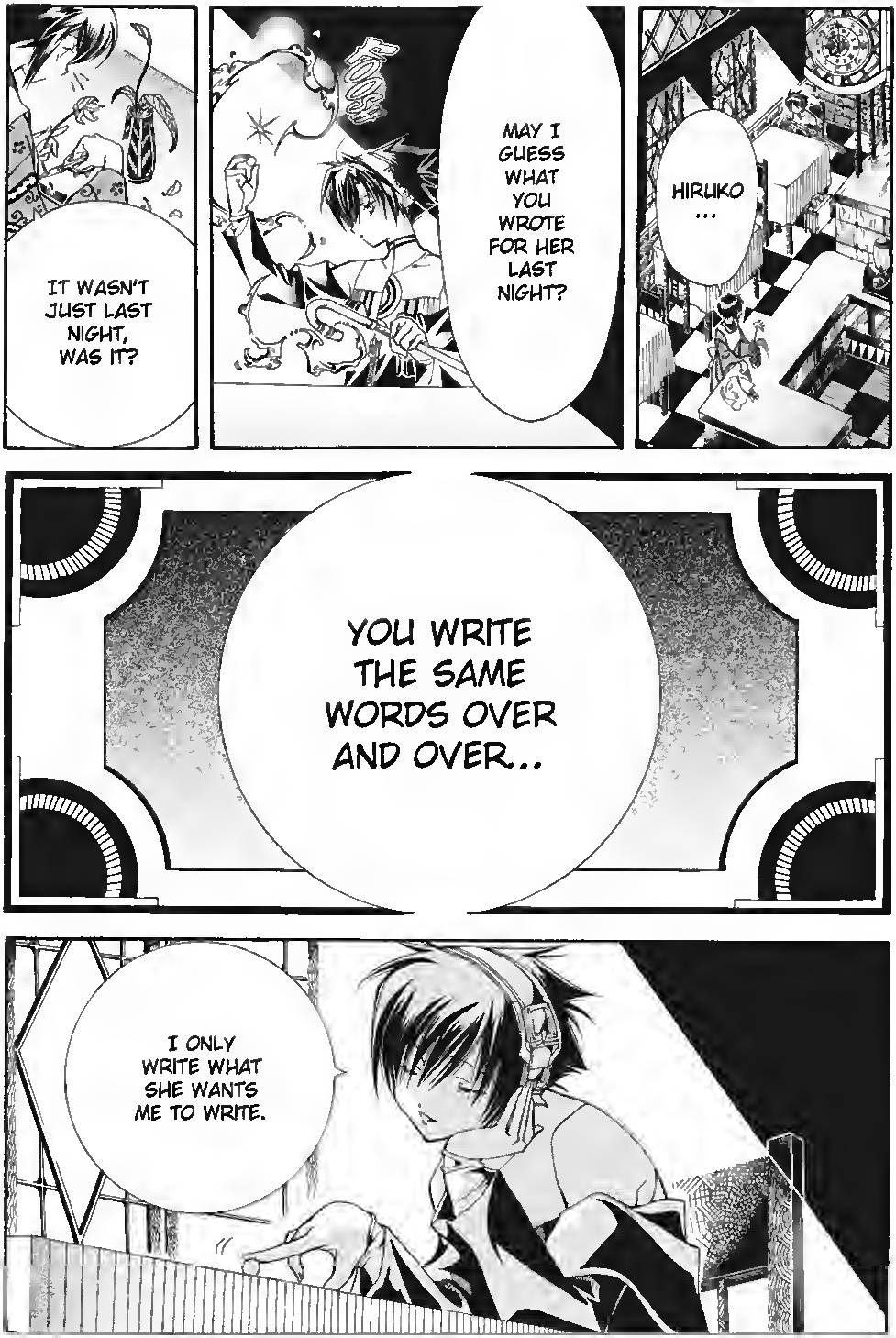
TOMORROW I WILL STAB SOMEONE.

WHATEVER YOU LIKE.
PLEASE! MAKE IT SAY SOMETHING ELSE!
WHAT?
ARE YOU CERTAIN YOU WOULDN'T PREFER TO DO THIS YOURSELF?
YES.
SLK
DO YOU WISH ME TO WRITE THE SAME THING AGAIN?
IT IS YOUR DECISION, YOU KNOW.
...AGAIN?

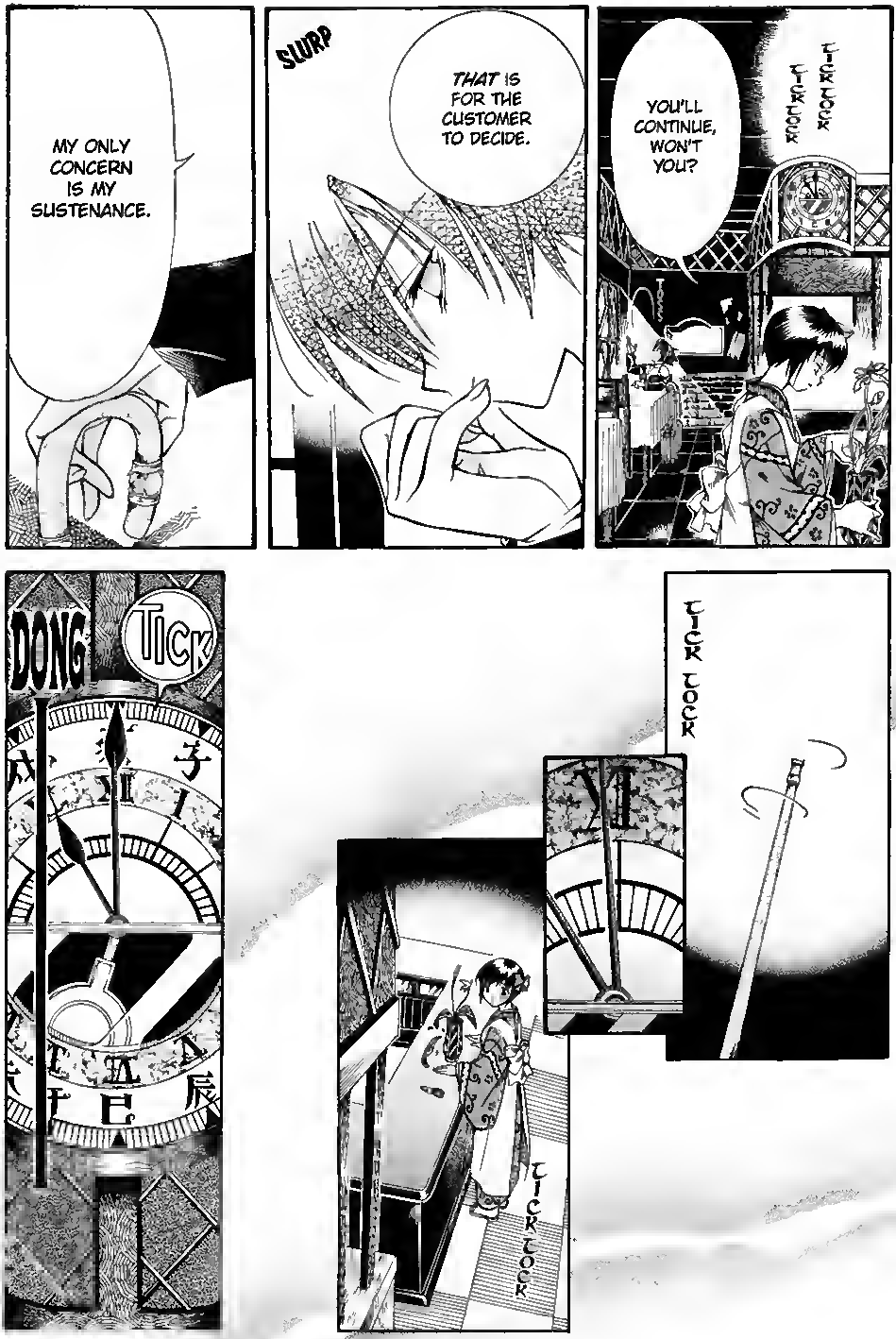
I REPLY ...
NOW ...
I KNOW HOW THIS GOES...
I'VE SEEN ALL THIS BEFORE ...
WAIT...
HUH?
WRITE WHATEVER YOU LIKE.
... DONE.
CLICK
TICK
TOCK
THIS LIFE IS FINE.
TICK
I DO NOT WANT FOR CHANGE.
SWING
SWING
YES.. THIS IS WHAT I WANT.

I'VE RE-WRITTEN THE SENTENCE.
NOW IT'S TIME FOR ME TO COLLECT YOUR NIGHTMARE.
TIME TO WAKE UP NOW.
HEH ...
WHAT DID HE ...?
OH!
THIS IS...
...
THIS IS WHAT I WANT.
THIS IS WHAT I WANT.
WOOSH

...A COMPLETELY WHITE SPACE?
AH. TO REPRESENT THE BLANK PAGE OF HER TOMORROW, I SEE.
THE WORDS THAT SHE WROTE HAD STRONG IMPLICATIONS FOR HER..
AND THEY CARVED THEMSELVES INTO THE SPACE OF HER TRUE SELF'S HEART.
GLANCE
TICK TOCK
TICK TOCK

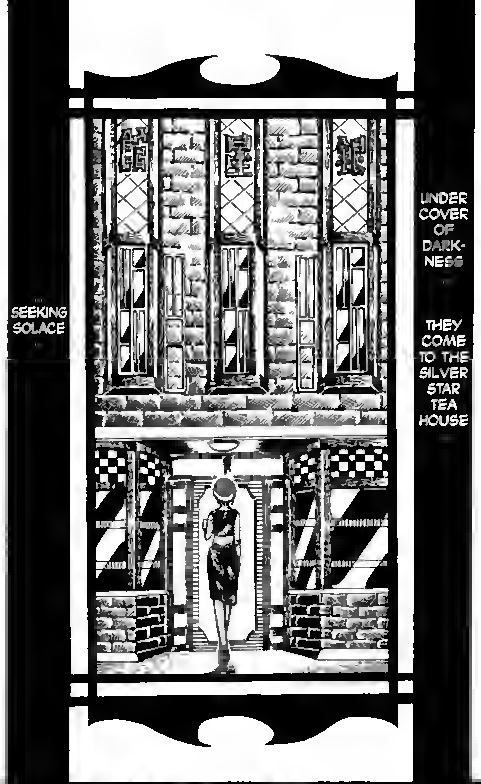

IT WASN'T JUST LAST NIGHT, WAS IT?
MAY I GUESS WHAT YOU WROTE FOR HER LAST NIGHT?
HIRUKO ...
YOU WRITE THE SAME WORDS OVER AND OVER...
I ONLY WRITE WHAT SHE WANTS ME TO WRITE.

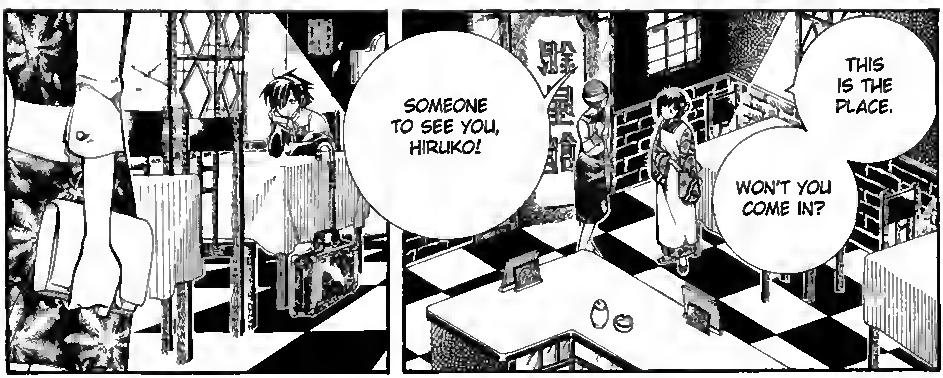
TOMORROW
WILL BE A
REPEAT OF
TODAY.


MY ONLY CONCERN IS MY SUSTENANCE.
SLURP
THAT IS FOR THE CUSTOMER TO DECIDE.
YOU'LL CONTINUE, WON'T YOU?
TICK TOCK
TICK TOCK
TICK TOCK
TICK TOCK
DONG
TICK

DONG
DONG
DONG
DONG
DON
SHH
KKK

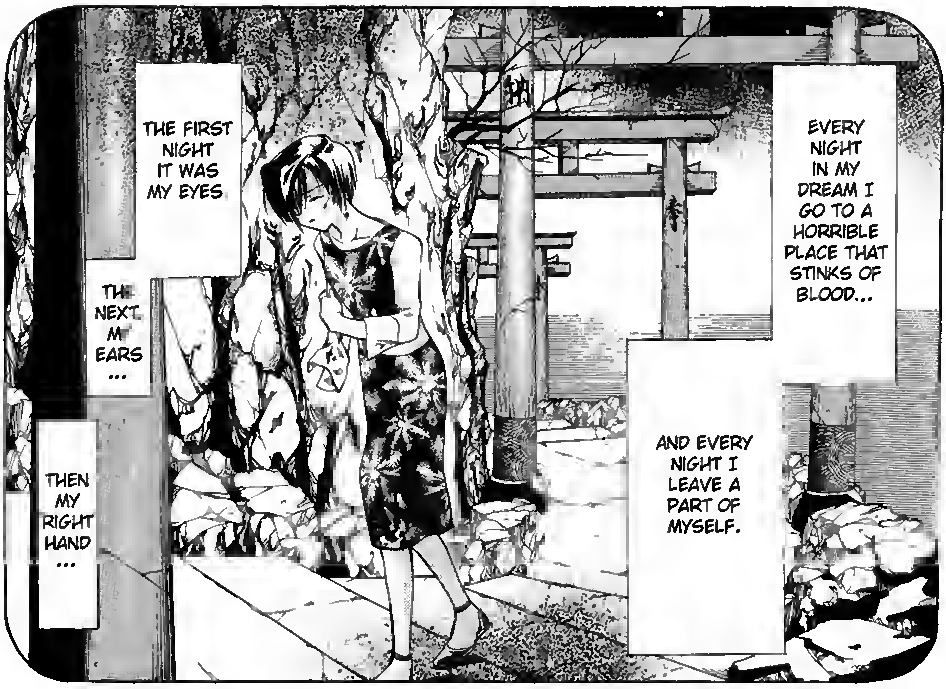
THE THIRD NIGHT: LOST THINGS





MY NAME IS AYANO SUZU-KAKE.
IT'S GOOD TO MEET YOU... HIRUKO, IS IT?
I heard her say your name.
GOOD EVENING.
OH!
Uh?
OH NO!
WHAT SHOULD I DO?
I COMPLETELY FORGOT TO BRING AN OFFERING!
OH, DON'T WORRY ...
HE'S NOT INTERESTED IN ANYTHING BUT YOUR NIGHTMARE ANYWAY.

OH, MY NIGHT-MARE...
WHAT KIND ...?
HM——...
...
WHAT KIND IS IT?
SCOOT
WHAT THINGS ARE YOU LOSING?
LOSING ...?
I DREAM I KEEP LOSING THINGS.
... PARTS OF MYSELF
I KEEP LOSING ...


THE FIRST NIGHT IT WAS MY EYES.
THE NEXT MY EARS...
THEN MY RIGHT HAND...
EVERY NIGHT IN MY DREAM I GO TO A HORRIBLE PLACE THAT STINKS OF BLOOD...
AND EVERY NIGHT I LEAVE A PART OF MYSELF.

YOU WISH TO RECOVER YOUR MISSING PARTS.
EVEN IN THE WORLD OF DREAMS, ONE WOULD HAVE A HARD TIME IF THE BODY DID NOT REMAIN... INTACT.

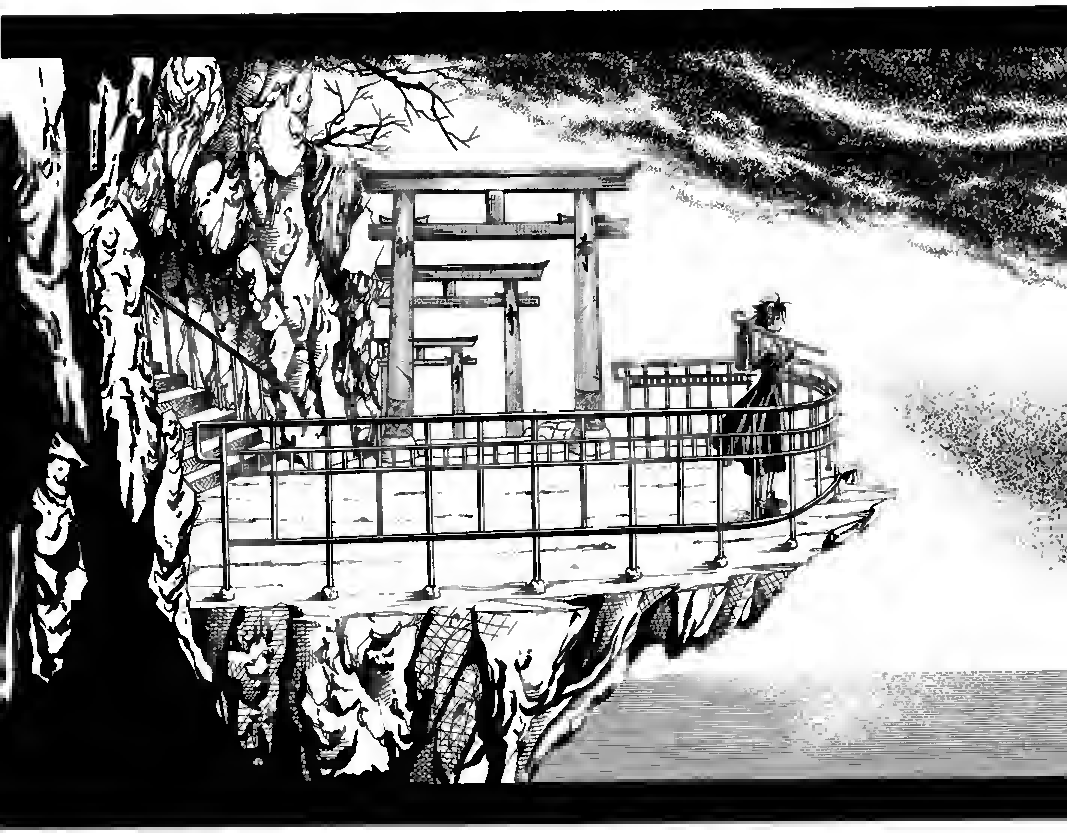
...I'M AFRAID TO SLEEP.
I'M SO DISTURBED BY IT ALL...

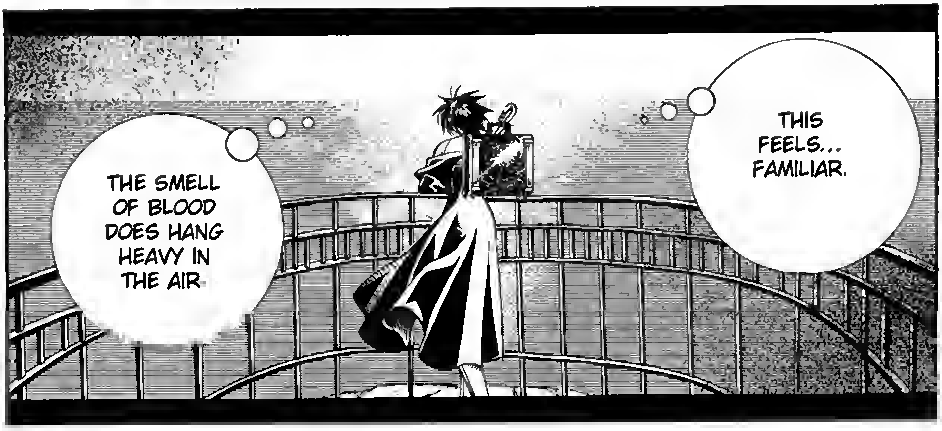
SHE'S SOMETHING, ISN'T SHE?
I'm so sorry! ...
I always do that...
PLEASE, HIRUO!
IT'S HIRUKO.
ARGH
YES!! PLEASE. IF YOU COULD ACCOMPANY ME INTO MY DREAM AND HELP ME FIND MY MISSING PARTS I'M SURE I COULD SLEEP PROPERLY AGAIN!

AREN'T YOU CURIOUS AS TO *WHY* YOU'RE LOSING PARTS OF YOUR BODY IN YOUR DREAM?
YOU SEE WHAT I MEAN?
ALWAYS FORGETTING... EVEN IN MY DREAMS.
B-BUT!
I'M AFRAID I DON'T REALLY CARE WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR BODY.
BUT *YOU*, AYANO...
?!
THE PLACE THAT STINKS OF BLOOD... IS IT FAMILIAR? DO YOU RECOGNIZE IT?
Um...
A LITTLE.

EACH TIME I LOSE A PART OF MY BODY, A PART OF MY MEMORY FADES...
I CAN'T BE SURE.
HER MEMORY ...
IF I CAN RECOVER ALL MY LOST BODY PARTS, THEN I'LL BE ABLE TO SLEEP AGAIN.
AND MAYBE I'LL GET MY MEMORY BACK TOO...
SCOOT
I'LL GO WITH YOU INTO YOUR DREAM.
REALLY?!
THANK YOU!
SHALL WE?
TAP
UM ...?

I'M FAR MORE INTERESTED IN WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO YOU AFTERWARD.
MM
WHOOSH
?
SLEEP NOW...
LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.




THE SMELL OF BLOOD DOES HANG HEAVY IN THE AIR.
THIS FEELS... FAMILIAR.

HIRUKOOO!
THE AIR IS LADEN WITH IT... IT FEELS GOOD.
WHERE ARE YOU? MY EYES, I CAN'T...
THERE.
SHOOSH
Oh!
THANK YOU.
LET'S SEE WHAT'S DOWN THIS PATH.

AYANO ...
YOUR EAR.
OH, I HEAR SOMETHING. I CAN HEAR AGAIN...
THAT DIDN'T TAKE LONG...
GOODBYE ...
... WHAT?

...BUT I MUST HAVE IMAGINED IT.
YOUR EYES, AYANO ...
NO. DID YOU JUST HEAR SOME-THING?
HIRUKO, DID YOU JUST SAY SOMETHING?
SOMETHING... SOMETHING FAMILIAR, I THOUGHT...
OH!
I WONDER WHAT YOU'LL SEE.

HE? WHO'S HE?
I- I DON'T REALLY KNOW...
BUT ...
HE'S THERE!
WHAT DO YOU SEE?
NOTHING YET...
WAIT, I CAN SEE HIM NOW!
I...NO... THIS ISN'T GOOD AT ALL...
MY MEMORY IS STARTING TO COME BACK TO ME.

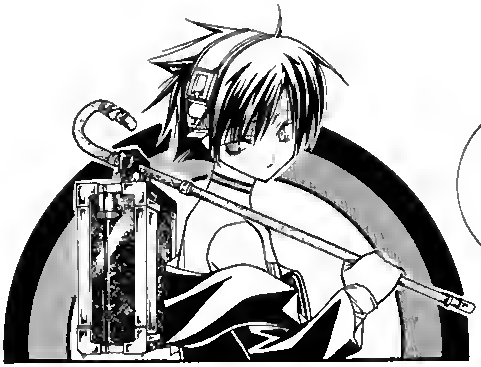
MY HAND!...
BUT YOUR HAND IS JUST OVER THERE.
THIS IS GOOD ENOUGH, HIRUKO.
LET'S GO.
YOU'RE NEARLY DONE, AYANO.
JUST ONE PIECE LEFT TO COLLECT...
...AND THEN, ALL YOUR FORGOTTEN MEMORIES.
CLACK
YOUR BODY HIDES A TERRIBLE MEMORY, DOES IT NOT?
...
MY MEMORIES...
NO! I DON'T WANT TO DO THIS ANY-MORE!

DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT I SAID?
I'M INTERESTED IN WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU AFTERWARD.
I WANT TO SEE YOU CRY.
YOUR GRIEF WILL MAKE YOUR NIGHTMARE ALL THE MORE DELICIOUS.
TO SUFFER SUCH THAT YOU CRAVE DEATH...
SAI

NO MATTER WHAT!
Very good.
FINE! I'LL GET THE HAND...
YOU MONSTER!
BUT I AM NOT GOING TO CRY!
MY MEMORIES ...
MY HAND FEELS WARM...
THIS PLACE ...

YES ...
...MY BELOVED.
THIS WAS OUR FAVORITE PLACE. WE CAME HERE ALL THE TIME.
BUT ...
HE LET GO OF MY HAND...
GOODBYE ...

MY EARS BURNED TO HEAR HIM SAY GOODBYE.
YOU MET SOMEONE ELSE...?
WITH MY EYES, I SAW HIM TRY TO SMILE.
THAT WAS THE LAST THING I SAW.


YOU CRIED.

WAS THE MEMORY OF A BROKEN HEART.
WHAT WAS STUCK IN MY BODY...
I WISH I DIDN'T HAVE TO FACE THIS.

I LOVED HIM.
I LOVED HIM SO MUCH THAT LOSING HIM TO ANOTHER MADE ME WANT TO KILL HIM.

...

SNIFF

YOU PROVOKED ME ON PURPOSE, DIDN'T YOU?
HIRUKO ...

THANK YOU. NOW THAT I HAVE FACED THE MEMORY...
IT'S TIME FOR ME TO LET *THIS LOST THING* GO.
...
Other side.
Sorry I slapped you.
DID YOU REMEMBER EVERYTHING?
YES, I THINK SO.
BUT ...
LOOK AT YOUR LEFT HAND.
WHY DID *THAT* HAPPEN?!

I SUSPECT IT'S SOMETHING YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO FORGET.
THERE. IT'S OVER THERE.
GO GET IT.
...A GOOD MEMORY OF HIM?
SOMETHING I WOULDN'T WANT TO FORGET...?
IT'LL BE EASIER ONCE I START TO MAKE MEMORIES WITH A NEW LOVER.
MAYBE I SHOULD LEAVE IT BE SO I HAVE NOTHING TO MAKE MY AFFECTION FOR MY TRUE LOVE LINGER.

...
PERHAPS. BUT...
I WONDER, AYANO...
YES?
WHY DO YOU THINK YOUR NIGHTMARE SMELLS OF BLOOD?
?
TIME TO WAKE UP, AYANO.
ASH

THAT UNBEARABLE SUFFERING MADE YOU LEAVE IT BEHIND IN YOUR DREAMS.
Yes Yes
AS A WOMAN, I UNDERSTAND. THAT PAIN...
CLACK
I SEE.
HONESTLY, I THINK IT WAS HARD FOR HIM, TOO. I COULD SEE HIS PAIN.
...SO MUCH AS FORGETTING THE DETAILS OF YOUR HEARTBREAK.
SO YOU WEREN'T REALLY LOSING BODY PARTS ...
THE LOOK ON HIS FACE...
...
HE WAS IN AGONY.
THIS COULD HAVE BEEN TASTIER.

DING
I SEE! GOOD LUCK, THEN.
...AND HIS, I'M GOING TO FIND MYSELF A NEW BOYFRIEND RIGHT AWAY.
SO! FOR MY SAKE...
OFFICER, THAT'S HER!
AYANO!
I'VE FOUND YOU AT LAST!
THAT'S THE WOMAN WHO *STABBED* ME!
?!

I COULDN'T REASON WITH HER. SHE STABBED ME!
WHEN I TOLD HER IT WAS OVER, I SAW HER REACH FOR A KNIFE WITH HER LEFT HAND...
I RAN FOR MY LIFE!
BECAUSE OF HER I'VE SPENT THE LAST THREE MONTHS IN HOSPITAL!

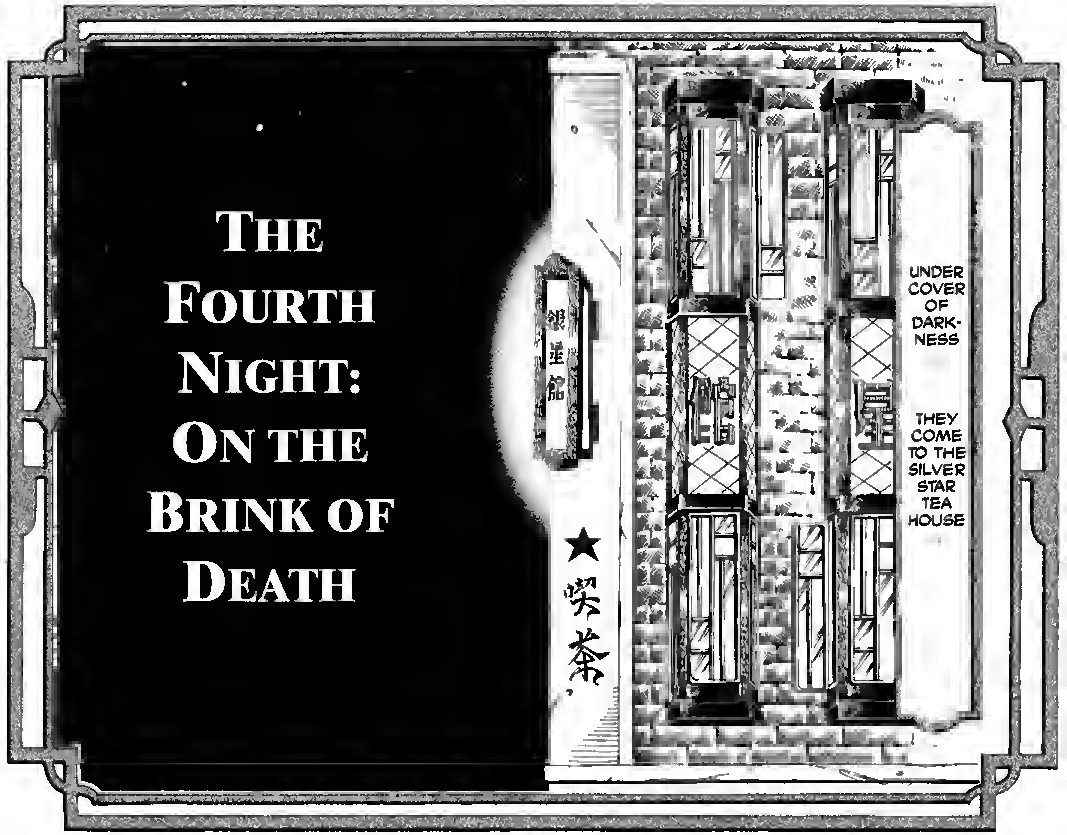
?
YOU SEE? HER DREAM DID HAVE A STRANGE SMELL OF BLOOD TO IT.
NOW WE KNOW WHY.

BUT YOU'RE NOT AN EASY WOMAN TO FIND, ARE YOU AYANO?
WELL, WE DON'T HAVE ANY OTHER WITNESSES ...
CONFESS, AYANO!
YOU STABBED ME!

SHE'S BEEN ON THE RUN THIS WHOLE TIME!
THE POLICE TRIED TO TRACK HER DOWN...

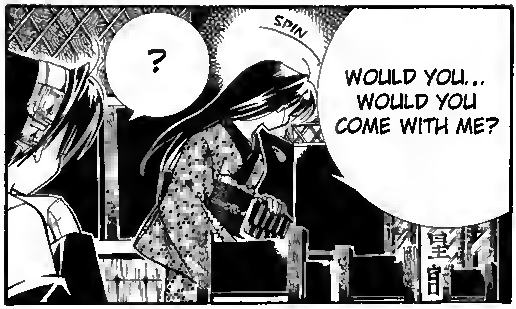
I HONESTLY DON'T REMEMBER THAT.
WITH MY *LEFT HAND*, YOU SAY?
?!
...I DON'T HAVE ANY RECOLLECTION WHATSOEVER.

The Fourth Night: On the Brink of Death



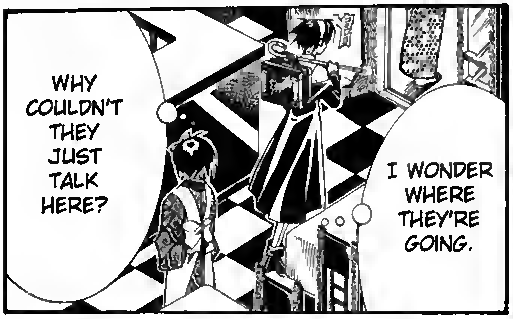
Welcome
HE'S OVER THERE.
YOU'VE COME ABOUT A NIGHTMARE?
IS HIRUKO HERE?
UM ...
...
...
NO, I JUST... I'D IMAGINED THAT A BAKU WOULD BE... SCARIER.
SOMETHING WRONG?
HEH! COME ON IN.
THAT'S HIRUKO ...?

MY NAME IS CHIKAGE FUKAGAWA!
I BEG YOU— PLEASE HELP ME!!
CLACK
TONIGHT I JUST KNOW THAT I'LL JUMP AND I'LL DIE!
EACH TIME I GET CLOSER TO THE EDGE, AND...
IT'S BEEN THE SAME THING FOR THREE NIGHTS NOW.
...
DID SOMETHING HAPPEN FOUR DAYS AGO?
I WONDER WHAT THIS IS ABOUT?


SPIN
?
WOULD YOU.. WOULD YOU COME WITH ME?

YES ...
FOUR DAYS AGO, THE MAN I LOVE TOOK HIS OWN LIFE TO ESCAPE THE PAIN OF A FATAL ILLNESS.

ALL RIGHT. I'LL LISTEN AS WE WALK.
SCOOT


WHY COULDN'T THEY JUST TALK HERE?
I WONDER WHERE THEY'RE GOING.

WAIT

IT WAS MIDDAY AND CROWDED. I WAS BY MYSELF.
ON THE FIRST NIGHT, I DREAMED I WAS WALKING DOWN THIS ROAD.
IT'S CLOSED OFF NOW.
THIS ONE?
CLOSED
!
...
ON THE SECOND NIGHT I STEPPED INSIDE A BUILDING ...
AND I TOOK THE ELEVATOR TO THE ROOF.
DING
DONG

ON THE THIRD NIGHT, I WAS STANDING ON THE ROOF, LOOKING DOWN AT WHERE WE ARE NOW.
LET ME GUESS, THIS IS WHERE YOUR LOVER JUMPED FOUR NIGHTS AGO...
...AND YOU'RE AFRAID YOU'RE GOING TO FOLLOW HIM IN YOUR NIGHTMARE?
YES! THAT'S IT.
THAT'S WHY I NEED YOU TO STOP IT...
DO YOU REALLY?
!

IT LOOKS AS THOUGH YOU WANT TO FOLLOW HIM.
PROBABLY EVEN TAKING THE SAME ROUTE HE TOOK TO HIS DEATH.
YOU'RE WALKING STRAIGHT TO THE PLACE WHERE HE COMMITTED SUICIDE...
DOESN'T IT SEEM AS IF...
...
...YOU INVITED ME ALONG NOT TO STOP YOU FROM JUMPING IN YOUR DREAM...
...BUT TO MAKE YOU JUMP IN REALITY?
...
YES.
I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO FORGET HIM!
IT'S LIKE MY NIGHTMARE IS LEADING ME TO WHERE HE IS NOW... AND...

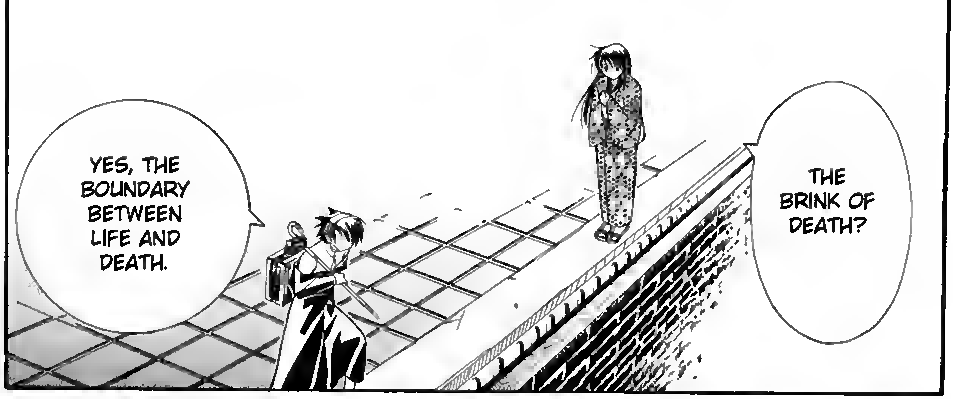
IF YOU WISH TO DIE, THEN JUMP...
WELL, I'M AFRAID IF I GET NO NIGHTMARE OUT OF THE DEAL, THEN I'VE NO FURTHER INTEREST.
BUT YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN.
I NEED YOUR HELP!
WAIT, HIRUKO!
HARUO ?!
CHIKAGE!
WHO ARE YOU?
WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG?
YOU'VE BEEN FOLLOWING US SINCE WE LEFT THE SHOP.

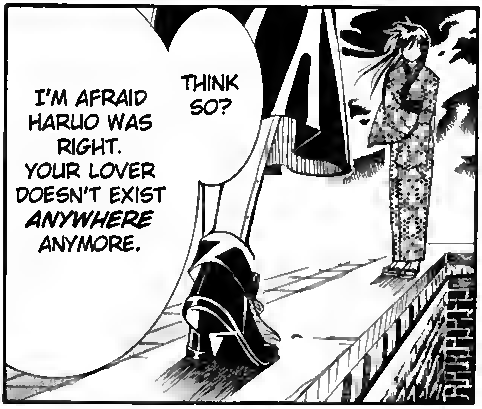
...
PLEASE DON'T DO ANYTHING RASH, CHIKAGE...
I WOULD NEVER LEAVE YOU, I PROMISE!
PLEASE... FIND A NEW LIFE TO LEAD.
I'M SORRY... I CAN ONLY THINK OF YOU AS A FRIEND.
THE ONE PERSON I LOVED...
HE'S GONE!
HE'S DEAD!
TUG
HEY, NOW ...
CRASH
YOU JERK!
UNREQUITED LOVE... WHY DON'T YOU JUST MAKE IT A DOUBLE SUICIDE?
HEE HEE...
YOU LOVE HER, DO YOU?

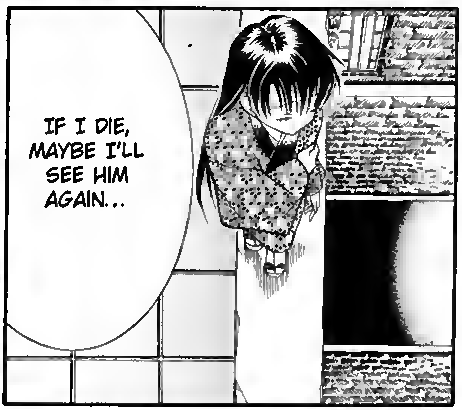
PLEASE ...
COULD YOU MAKE SURE THAT SHE GOES THROUGH WITH IT IN HER NEXT DREAM?
HARUO ...?!
YOU SHOULD BE A LITTLE NICER TO ME IF YOU WANT MY HELP.
!
I HEARD YOU TALKING.
I'M SORRY.
EVEN IF SHE'S STILL IN LOVE WITH HIM, AS LONG AS SHE'S ALIVE, I...
PERHAPS IF SHE SEES WHAT DEATH IS LIKE, EVEN IN A DREAM... PERHAPS THEN SHE'LL CHANGE HER MIND.
HARUO...

SLEEP NOW...
LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.
THAT COULD BE DELICIOUS.
DEATH?
CAN I JOIN YOU...
...IN YOUR NEXT NIGHT-MARE?
I WONDER HOW THIS WILL END.
...
...YES.
SWOOSH

THE FOURTH DREAM...
WHAT WILL YOU DO?
ON THE BRINK OF DEATH...


YES, THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH.
THE BRINK OF DEATH?

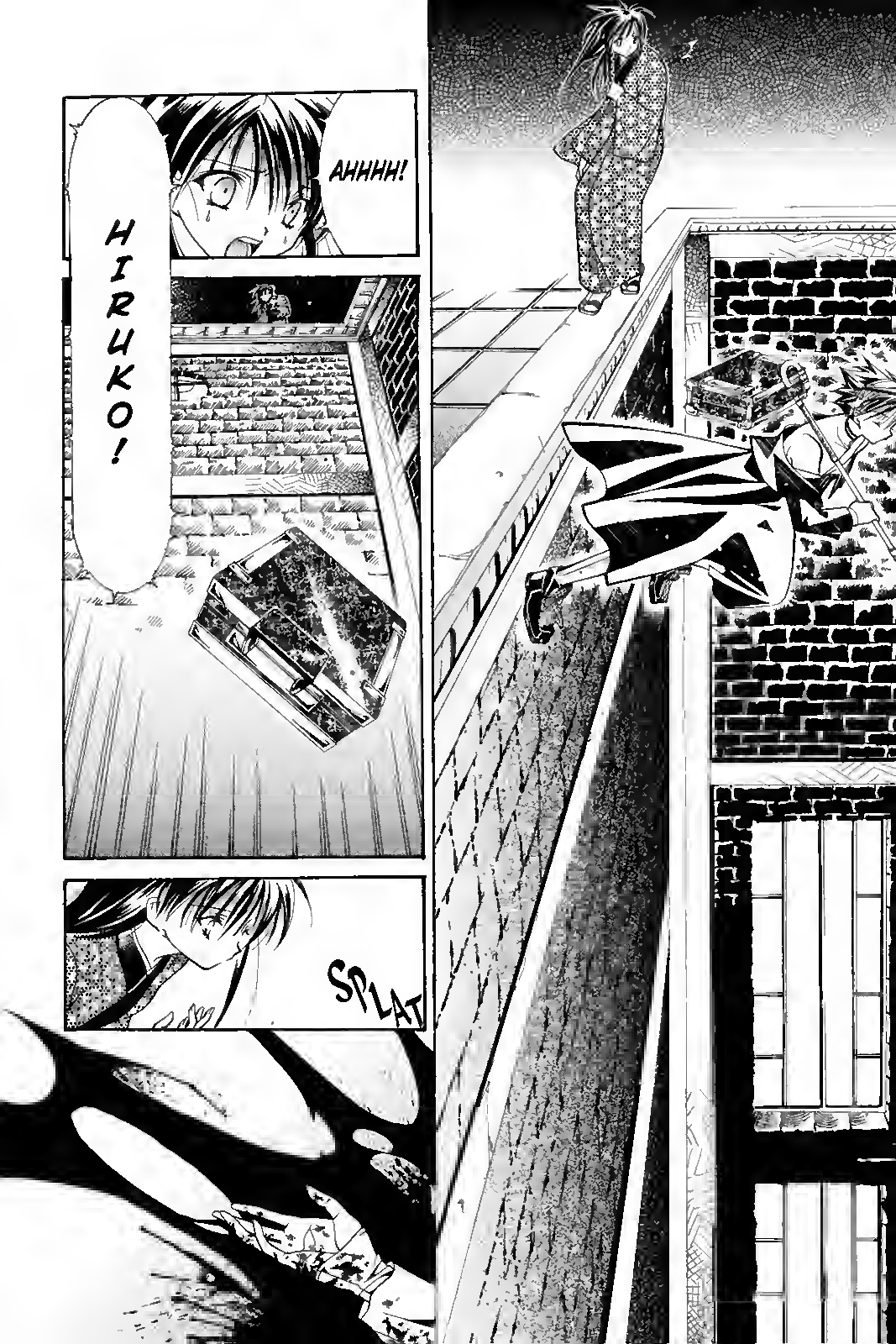

I'M AFRAID HARUO WAS RIGHT. YOUR LOVER DOESN'T EXIST ANYWHERE ANYMORE.
THINK SO?


IF I DIE, MAYBE I'LL SEE HIM AGAIN..

SHALL I..?
WHEE!

IF YOU DO DIE, THEN YOU WILL BE FREED FROM ALL YOUR ATTACHMENTS HERE.

BUT ...


AHHHH!
HIRUKO!
SPLAT

YOUR LOVER DOESN'T EXIST ANYWHERE ANYMORE.
...
I'M SCARED ...
BUZZ
I WANT TO BE WITH HIM, BUT...
NO!
NO...
WHAT SHOULD I DO?
!
WHOOSH
WILL I WAKE UP...
OR...
WHAT NOW?
WHOA!!
AHH!
WOOOO
WILL I DIE?!

I RETURN TO NOTHING AGAIN.
THE BRINK OF DEATH...
I'VE BEEN DEDICATED TO SOMETHING THAT DOESN'T EXIST...
I SEE.
IF YOU DO DIE, THEN YOU WILL BE FREED FROM ALL YOUR ATTACHMENTS HERE.
SPLAT
HE... HE DIED. HE DOESN'T EXIST ANYWHERE ANYMORE.
THIS BODY...
...AND THE MEMORIES OF HIM IN IT WILL PERISH.
GONE FOR-EVER.

HE... HE DIED. HE DOESN'T EXIST *ANYWHERE* ANYMORE.
THIS BODY...
...AND THE MEMORIES OF HIM IN IT WILL PERISH.
GONE FOR-EVER.

THE BRINK OF DEATH...
I'VE BEEN DEDICATED TO SOMETHING THAT DOESN'T EXIST...
I RETURN TO NOTHING AGAIN.
IF YOU DO DIE, THEN YOU WILL BE FREED FROM ALL YOUR ATTACHMENTS HERE.
I SEE.
SPLAT

I'M ALIVE
OH
SCOOT
I FEEL MUCH BETTER, IN FACT.
NOT AT ALL.
KUFU
KUFU
DOESN'T HURT AS MUCH AS YOU EXPECTED, DOES IT?
KUFF
HIRUKO?
IT'S BECAUSE I'M DREAMING, ISN'T IT?
IT'S LIKE...

IT'S LIKE I'VE BEEN *BORN AGAIN.*
EVEN WITH ALL THE GORE?
YES. STRANGE, ISN'T IT?
I'M SURE I'LL ENJOY THIS LATER.
BLOODSTAINED NIGHTMARES ARE PARTICULARLY TASTY.
I'M *DELIGHTED.*
FOOSH
TIME TO WAKE UP NOW.

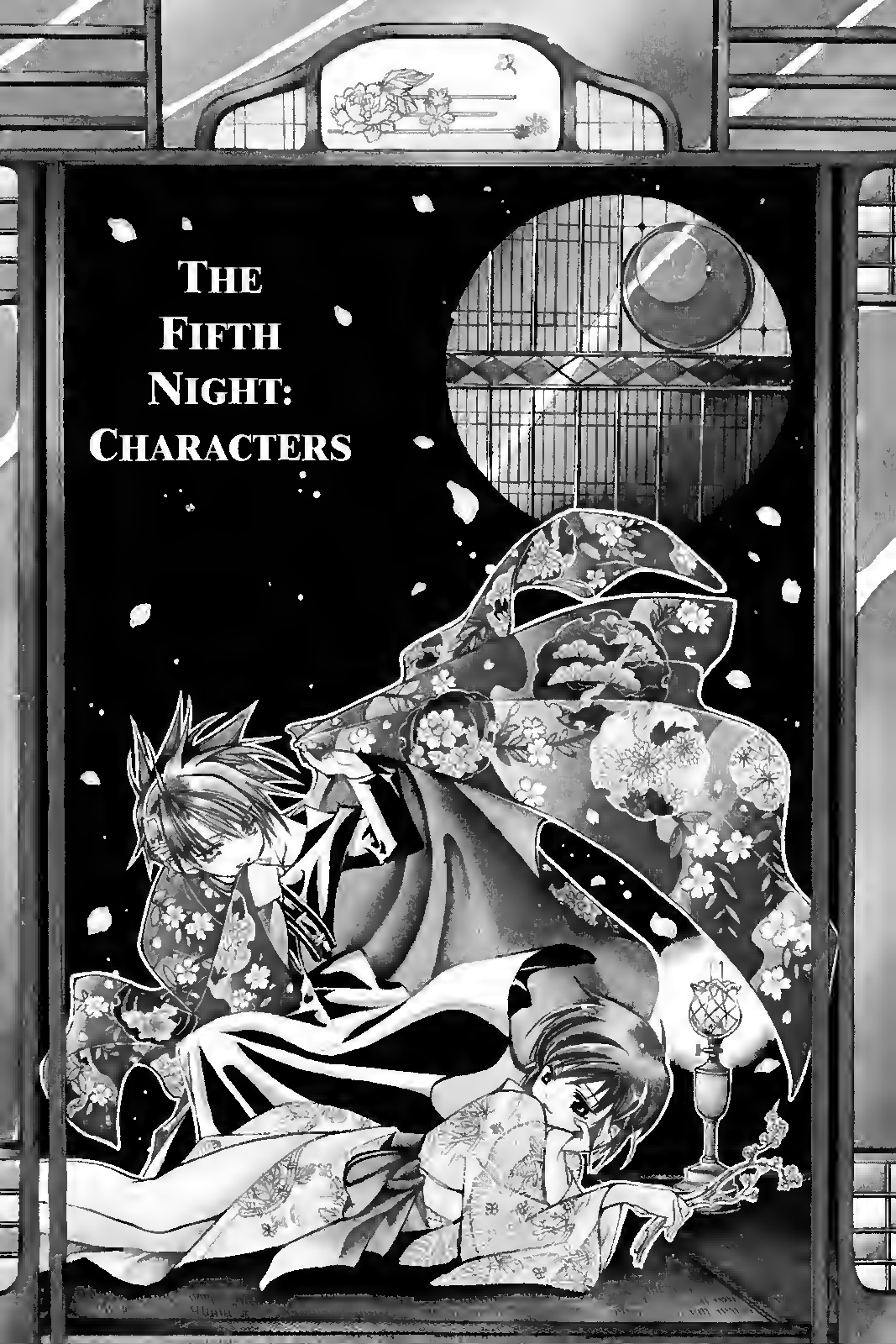
HARUO ...
IS IT MORNING ALREADY? HAVE YOU BEEN HERE WITH ME ALL NIGHT ...?
OH!
CHIKAGE!
YOU'RE AWAKE.

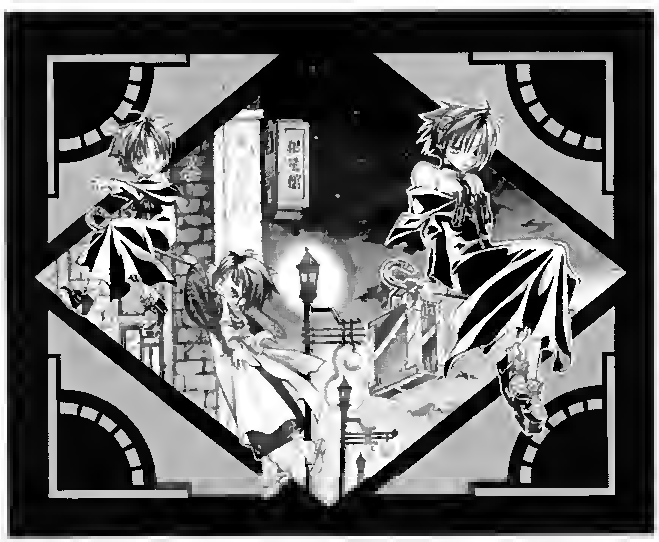
WELL... YES...
SHALL WE GO HOME NOW?
...YES.

DAYS LATER...
STILL RECOVERING?
OF COURSE. UNLIKE THE DREAMER, MY REAL BODY ENTERS THE DREAM.
HEE HEE
I SUPPOSE THE FACT THAT YOU SURVIVED AT ALL IS PROOF THAT YOU REALLY AREN'T HUMAN...
YOU TOOK A BIG RISK FOR THE SAKE OF THAT GIRL.
BUT I'M IMPRESSED, JUST THE SAME.
PISH! I DID IT ALL FOR THE NIGHTMARE.
I KNEW IF SHE FELL, THE DREAM WOULD BE SOAKED IN BLOOD.
Two people's blood?
I SEE ...

ANYWAY, HER BRINK OF DEATH WASN'T REALLY A PHYSICAL BOUNDARY, WAS IT?
KLINK
IT WAS ABOUT THE CHOICE BETWEEN CLINGING TO HER FEELINGS FOR THE DEAD MAN...
THE BOUNDARY WAS AN EMOTIONAL ONE.
...AND WALKING DOWN A NEW ROAD.
HM. I WONDER IF SHE'S HAPPY WITH HARUO?
I DON'T CARE. WHAT I WANT TO KNOW IS HOW LONG UNTIL I GET ANOTHER NIGHTMARE LIKE THAT ONE ...?
DING

HARUO!
HIRUO, IS IT?
HOW ARE THINGS WITH CHIKAGE?
Come on in.
SHE...
SHE'S DEAD. SHE DIED IN AN ACCIDENT FOUR DAYS AGO.
I BEG YOU— PLEASE HELP ME!!
IT'S BEEN THE SAME THING FOR THREE NIGHTS NOW.
EACH TIME I GET CLOSER TO THE EDGE, AND...
I DO HOPE YOU'RE HUNGRY, HIRUKO...
...


THE
FIFTH
NIGHT:
CHARACTERS



UNDER COVER OF DARK-NESS ...
THEY COME TO THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE ...
SEEKING SOLACE ...
銀星館
TEA
DING

I WONDER WHAT SORT OF NIGHTMARE I'LL CONSUME TONIGHT.
ARE YOU HIRUKO THE BAKU?
I AM. AND YOU ARE...?
I AM KANAU ANAN.
I'VE COME FOR YOUR HELP WITH MY NIGHTMARE.
WELL?
'EVENING, KANAU. PLEASE HAVE A SEAT. I'LL MAKE SOME COFFEE.

IT'S ONLY TONIGHT THAT I HAVE THIS PROBLEM...
OR RATHER, EVERY NIGHT ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF MY FATHER'S DEATH.
OH?
BEFORE WE GET TO THE NIGHTMARE, WHY DON'T YOU TELL ME ABOUT YOUR FATHER AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS DEATH?
MY FATHER ...
YES ...
WELL ...

WE LIVED TOGETHER IN THE HOUSE THAT HAD BEEN MY FAMILY'S HOME FOR GENERATIONS.
MY FATHER WAS A VERY STRICT MAN. TO PUT IT BLUNTLY, HE WAS COLD. HE SHOWED ME NO AFFECTION AT ALL.
WHEN I WAS 6 YEARS OLD!!
I CAUSED MISCHIEF JUST TO GET A MOMENT OF MY FATHER'S ATTENTION.
I DIDN'T CARE IF HE YELLED, JUST SO LONG AS HE NOTICED ME...
INSTEAD, HE LOCKED ME IN A GARDEN SHED TO THINK ABOUT WHAT I HAD DONE.
HE WAS COMPLETELY OBLIVIOUS TO MY FEELINGS.

I HOPED SO.
STING
PERHAPS FATHER WILL BE WORRIED ABOUT MY WOUND...
STING
THE SAME THING HAPPENED WHEN I DROPPED A VASE AND A SHARD OF GLASS SLASHED MY LEG.
WE CAN BUY ANOTHER VASE...
...BUT WE CAN'T BUY BACK THE LIVES OF THOSE CRUSHED FLOWERS!
IDIOT!
BUT INSTEAD MY FATHER WAS ANGRIER THAN EVER.
THERE WERE NEVER FLOWERS IN THAT ROOM AGAIN.
I WONDER IF MY FATHER FEARED IT WOULD HAPPEN AGAIN...
CLEAN UP, THEN GO TO THE SHED AND THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU'VE DONE!

THE PRANKS I PULLED BECAUSE I WANTED HIS AFFECTION BECAME SEEDS OF HATRED AND RESENTMENT...
FATHER CARES MORE ABOUT THOSE FLOWERS THAN HE DOES ABOUT ME.
THEN ONE DAY, TEN YEARS AGO, SOMETHING HAPPENED...
AT MY FEET WAS MY FATHER'S BODY... CURLED UP ON THE GARDEN SHED FLOOR.
I WAS FINALLY AT PEACE.

I DON'T REMEMBER ANYTHING.
I'M NOT SURE. I WAS IN SHOCK...
YOU FEAR ...?
THEY SAID IT WAS AN ACCIDENT...
BUT I FEAR I MAY HAVE KILLED HIM!
THE ONLY THING I'M SURE OF...
I SEE ...
...WHETHER OR NOT MY FATHER LOVED ME.
...IS THAT I'LL NEVER REALLY KNOW...
... YES.
SHALL WE GET TO THE DREAM, THEN?
...

BUT ALL THE THINGS I REMEMBERED...

I MANAGED MY FEAR BY TRYING TO PICTURE WHAT I SAW IN THE LIGHT.

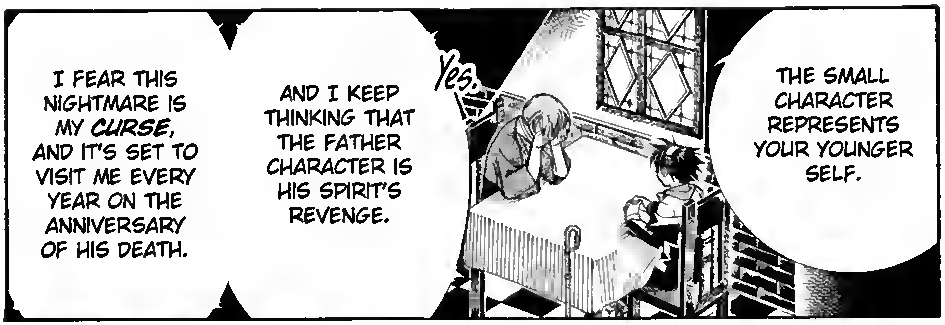
IT WAS PITCH BLACK IN THAT SHED. I COULDN'T SEE.

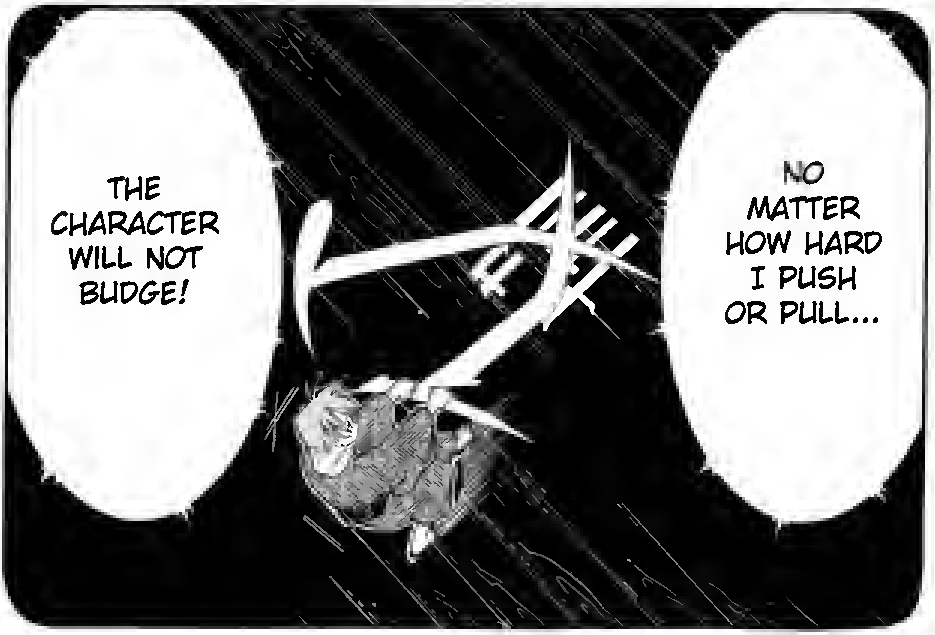
IN MY DREAM, IT LOOKS EXACTLY AS IT DID WHEN I WAS YOUNG. EXCEPT...

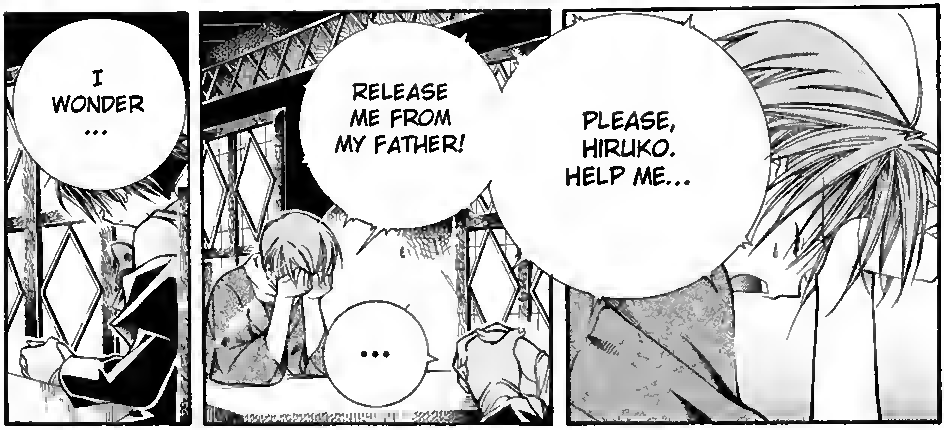
...I VISUALIZED AS CHARACTERS.

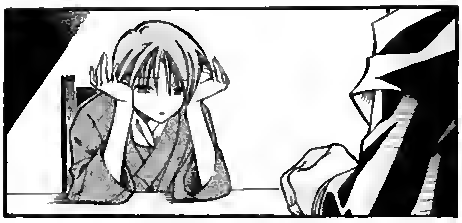
...AND IT PINS A TINY CHARACTER FOR MY NAME DOWN TO THE FLOOR.

IN THE NIGHTMARE THERE IS A HUGE CHARACTER FOR FATHER

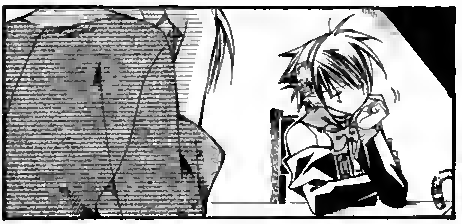

I FEAR THIS NIGHTMARE IS MY CURSE, AND IT'S SET TO VISIT ME EVERY YEAR ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF HIS DEATH.
AND I KEEP THINKING THAT THE FATHER CHARACTER IS HIS SPIRIT'S REVENGE.
Yes.
THE SMALL CHARACTER REPRESENTS YOUR YOUNGER SELF.


THE CHARACTER WILL NOT BUDGE!
NO MATTER HOW HARD I PUSH OR PULL...


I WONDER ...
RELEASE ME FROM MY FATHER!
...
PLEASE, HIRUKO. HELP ME...



IF I REALLY CAN'T MOVE IT TONIGHT THEN I WILL ACCEPT MY CRIME AND TURN MYSELF IN TO THE POLICE.
THAT CHARACTER IS MY FATHER'S MALICE.



VERY WELL.

IF, FOR WHATEVER REASON, WE CAN'T MOVE IT, WILL YOU BE ABLE TO ACCEPT THAT?

HIRUKO LOOKS UNHAPPY ...

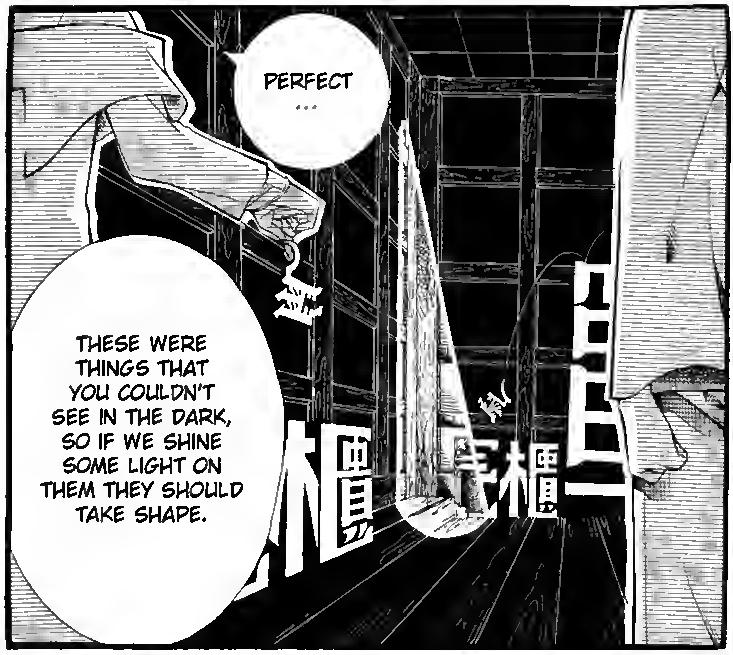
SLEEP NOW...
LEAVE THIS
WORLD
BEHIND.

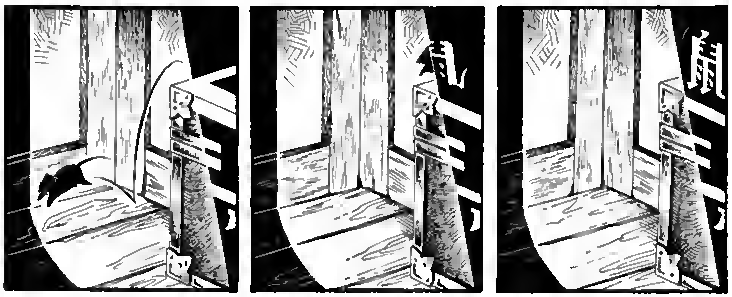
THERE!
NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES I SEE IT, IT STILL MAKES ME FEEL SICK!

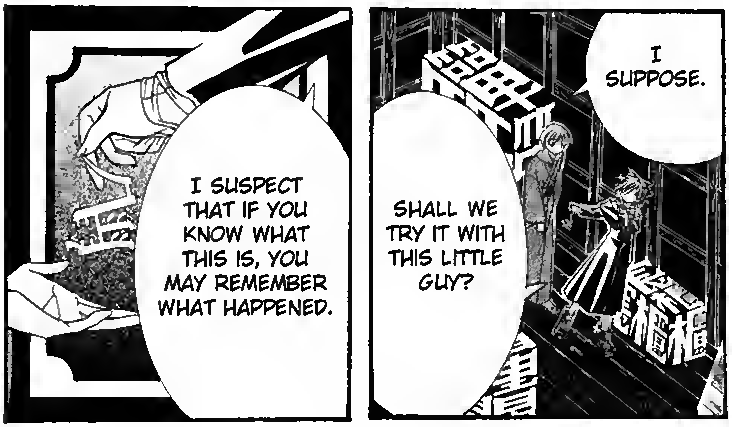
IT WON'T MOVE.
RRGH
RRGH
RRGH
RRGH
ARGH!
WE HAVE TO GET HIM OFF OF ME.
GRAB A HOLD!
IT WON'T MOVE!
IT WON'T MOVE...
I WONDER WHAT'S UP HERE ...
THAT WON'T WORK.
FATHER!
NO!

WHAT'S THAT?
WHEN DID HE ...?
WHAT?
URGH! Where'd he go?!
KANAU, COME HERE! THERE'S SOMETHING YOU SHOULD SEE.
LOOK AT THIS.
WHAT? THAT'S THE CHARACTER FOR RAT...

IT'S DEAD, THEN. SO?
IT'S A LITTLE TOO LIGHT.
WHAT ARE YOU GETTING AT?
THERE ARE A LOT OF THEM RUNNING AROUND HERE.
YES, BUT THIS ONE IS DIFFERENT.
IT WON'T MOVE, EVEN IF I POKE IT.
THIS ...
...IS NO ORDINARY RAT.


PERFECT
...
THESE WERE THINGS THAT YOU COULDN'T SEE IN THE DARK, SO IF WE SHINE SOME LIGHT ON THEM THEY SHOULD TAKE SHAPE.




I SUPPOSE.
SHALL WE TRY IT WITH THIS LITTLE GUY?
I SUSPECT THAT IF YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS, YOU MAY REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED.

!
HA!
IT'S A TOY...
I DO REMEMBER THIS.
MY FATHER MADE IT. HE ALWAYS LET ME TAKE IT WITH ME TO THE SHED.
HOW ...?
WHY ...?
DID HE GIVE IT TO ME SO I WOULDN'T BE AFRAID...? COULD HE HAVE CARED FOR ME AFTER ALL?

WHY COULDN'T I SEE THAT WHEN I WAS A CHILD?!
FATHER...
FATHER...
...FATHER!
CLICK
FATHER...

ARE YOU SORRY FOR WHAT YOU DID?
I THINK IT'S TIME TO COME OUT NOW, KANAU.
WOBBLE
THUD
THUNK
FATHER!
CRACK
AH!
CRACK
ARGH!
FATHER, NO!
GET OFF ME! YOU'RE GOING TO DIE!
CRACK
!!
TUMBLE
CRASH
KANAU!

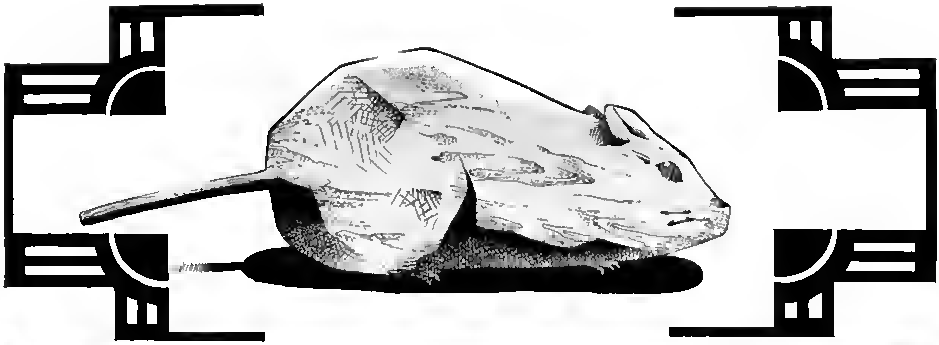
YOU'RE GOING TO DIE!!
PLUNK
SHH

YOU DIDN'T KILL YOUR FATHER...
YOUR FATHER DIED SAVING YOU.
HE... HE WOULDN'T MOVE. NOT AN INCH...
YOUR FATHER DID LOVE YOU. THERE WAS ANOTHER TIME THAT HE SHOWED YOU...
THE VASE ...?
YES, I UNDERSTAND NOW.
THE CRUSHED FLOWERS ...
HE MEANT THEM TO BE A LESSON. HE WAS AFRAID I'D HURT MYSELF.
I'VE BEEN A FOOL.
I THOUGHT THE CHARACTER WOULDN'T MOVE OUT OF MALICE...

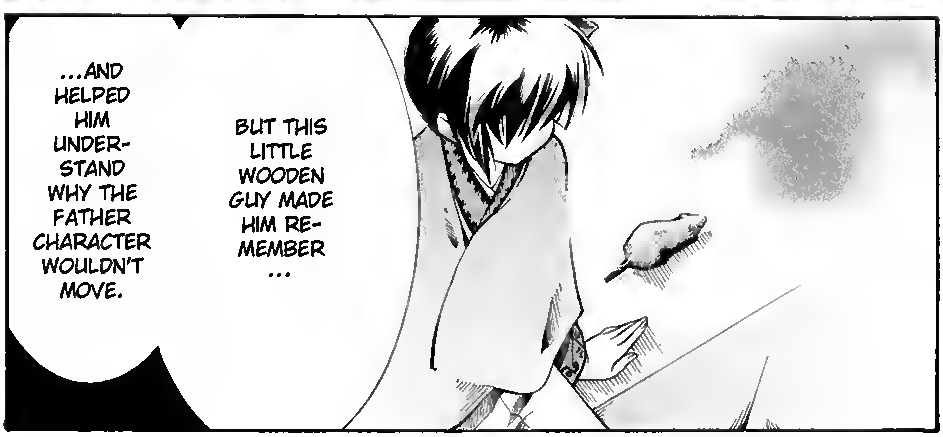
URGH
TIME TO WAKE UP NOW.
IT WON'T MOVE!
URGH
HERE, TAKE THIS.
BUT YOU... YOU UNDERSTOOD IT ALL.
ARE YOU SURE?
URGH
IT WON'T MOVE...
YES, I DON'T NEED IT.
MY FATHER ...
MY FATHER LOVED ME MORE THAN ENOUGH.
URGH

HERE. TAKE THIS.
ARE YOU SURE?
BUT YOU... YOU UNDERSTOOD IT ALL.
YES, I DON'T NEED IT.
MY FATHER ...
MY FATHER LOVED ME MORE THAN ENOUGH.
IT WON'T MOVE...
URGH
URGH
URGH

Uuugh
TIME TO WAKE UP NOW.
IT WON'T MOVE!



ADD TO THAT THE TERRIBLE SHOCK OF HIS FATHER'S DEATH, AND KANAU LOST HIS MEMORY.
KANAU ALWAYS THOUGHT HIS FATHER HATED HIM, SO HE COULDN'T CONCEIVE OF HIS SACRIFICE...


...AND HELPED HIM UNDER-STAND WHY THE FATHER CHARACTER WOULDN'T MOVE.
BUT THIS LITTLE WOODEN GUY MADE HIM RE-MEMBER ...

HIRUKO ...
THIS IS CUTE. CAN I HAVE IT?
MEANIE! WHY NOT?
YOINK
NO, YOU CAN'T.
THAT CHARACTER WAS A MANIFESTATION OF HIS FATHER'S LOVE, A FATHER WHO WOULD DIE TO PROTECT HIS SON.

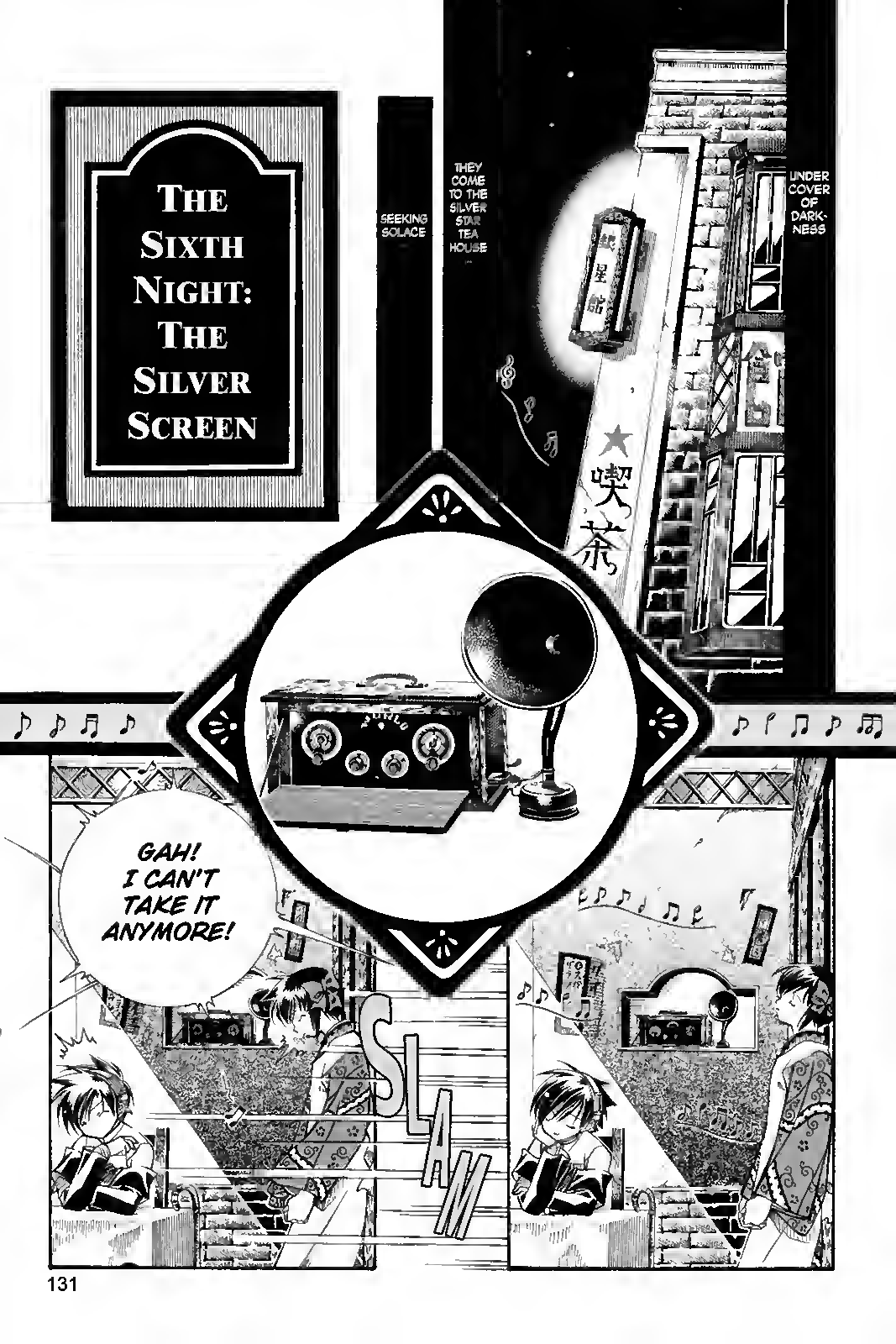
BECAUSE IT CAME FROM A DREAM. I ATE THAT DREAM, SO IT'LL DISAPPEAR SOON...
OH, I GET IT.
BUT ...
HIS FATHER'S LOVE... THE LOVE THAT HE FINALLY RECOGNIZED ...
THAT WILL ALWAYS STAY WITH KANAU.

THE SIXTH NIGHT: THE SILVER SCREEN

SEEKING SOLACE

THEY COME TO THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE

UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS



WHY?! WHY DID BENIBANA AND THAT GUY
HIRUKO, THE BAKU! IS THAT YOU?!
YOU HAVE TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT MY NIGHTMARE.
Just when it was quiet
MY NAME IS TOMEO KAGESA!
SHAKE SHAKE
YOU HAVE TO STOP BENIBANA!
And you have to calm down...
DO YOU MEAN THE MOVING PICTURE ACTRESS?
SWOOSH
THAT'S HER!

KINSEIKAN NEWS
BLIND LOVE
THE LONG NIGHT OF DARKNESS
SHE'S VERY POPULAR. SHE'S STARRED IN FIVE MOVING PICTURES JUST THIS MONTH!
BENIBANA MAKINO!
OOOH... SHE'S SO CUTE...♡
HE'S A BIT OF A FANATIC.
I must see her face a hundred times a day!
SIGH...
...SO WHAT IS THE DREAM, THEN?
THE LONG NIGHT OF DARKNESS IS PLAYING AT THE ASAKUSA THEATRE RIGHT NOW AND THERE'S A SCENE FROM IT THAT I JUST KEEP SEEING OVER AND OVER IN MY DREAMS.
WHICH SCENE?
IT'S THE SCENE WHERE BENIBANA AND HER LOVER COMMIT SUICIDE TOGETHER.
I'VE SEEN IT A DOZEN TIMES IN THE THEATRE ALREADY.
BUT...

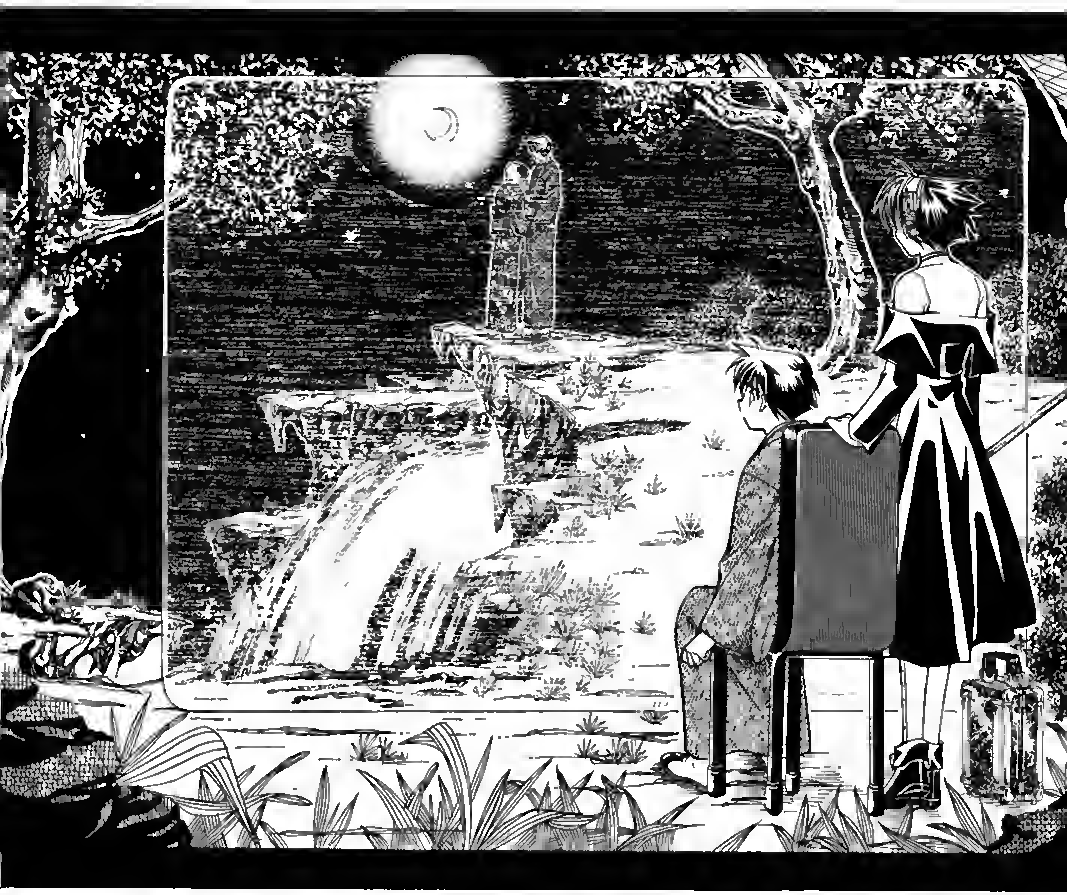
※AT THE TIME, MOST FILMS WERE COMPLETELY SILENT.

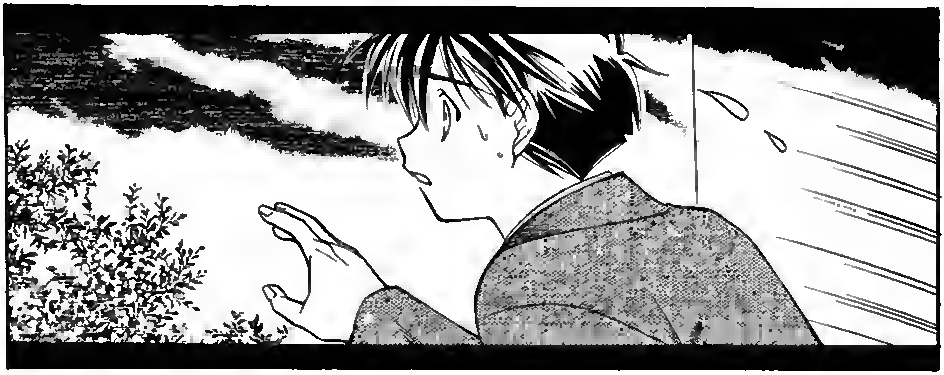
HER CO-STAR, HIKONOJO KAYAMA, IS EVEN MORE FAMOUS THAN BENIBANA, NO?
THE TWO OF THEM GREW VERY CLOSE DURING THE FILMING OF THAT PICTURE.
RUMOR HAS IT...
EH?
WHY DOESN'T HE STOP HER?! IF IT WERE ME, WE WOULD SURVIVE TOGETHER!
NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES I GO, I JUST CAN'T BEAR IT! MY BELOVED BENIBANA KILLS HERSELF WHILE HOLDING THE HAND OF ANOTHER MAN!
ARGH!
WHAT'S THE PICTURE ABOUT?
...AND I'M JUST ANOTHER AUDIENCE MEMBER, FALLING IN LOVE WITH THOSE EYES.
I UNDERSTAND THAT HOWEVER REAL MY FEELINGS MAY SEEM, IN THE END SHE'S A GIRL ON THE SILVER SCREEN...
...I KNOW.

EVEN IN MY DREAM, I WATCH FROM AFAR. I'M NEVER MORE THAN A BYSTANDER.
I'M PROBABLY HAVING THIS NIGHTMARE BECAUSE OF MY DESIRE FOR BENIBANA AND MY JEALOUSY OF KAYAMA.
IT'S THE SAME.
YES, BUT IN YOUR DREAM...
AND MY NIGHTMARE IS JUST LIKE THE PICTURE... SILENT.
THERE IS ALWAYS A SCREEN OR A WALL BETWEEN THEM AND ME. I CAN'T GET PAST IT.
I CAN'T SPEAK. ALL I CAN DO IS WATCH HER DIE, OVER AND OVER AGAIN.
WATCHING YOUR BELOVED DIE OVER AND OVER AGAIN, WHILE YOU'RE HELPLESS TO DO ANYTHING TO STOP IT... THAT'S HORRIBLE!
IN A REAL FILM, THERE WOULD BE A NARRATOR..

SO? WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?
WELL, YOU'RE A BAKU AND YOU'RE NOT INVOLVED SO...
SHOULDN'T YOU BE ABLE TO SPEAK IN THE NIGHTMARE AND GET THROUGH THAT WALL?
PROBABLY.
THEN YOU CAN GIVE HER A MESSAGE FROM ME!
BEG HER NOT TO DO IT! TELL HER I SAID SHE MUST LIVE ON— NO MATTER WHAT!
PLEASE! STOP HER IN MY STEAD!
IT WEIGHS HEAVY ON MY HEART. MY FEELINGS ARE JUST TOO MUCH...
...
IF YOU JUST WANT ME TO STOP HER, I CAN DO THAT MUCH.

FOOSH
SLEEP NOW... LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.





PLEASE, DON'T...
YOU MUST LIVE ON, NO MATTER WHAT.

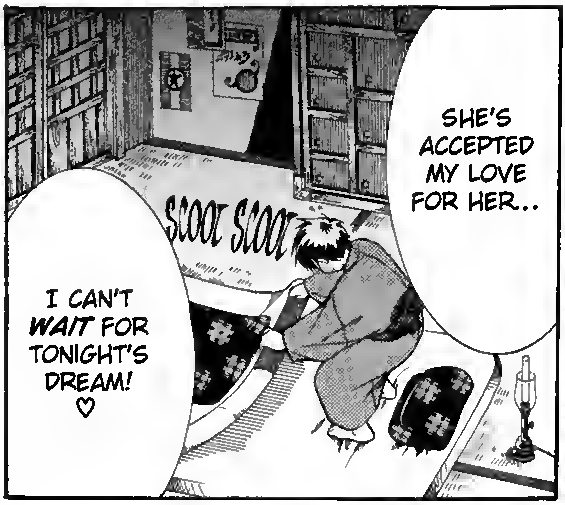
HE IS TOMEO KAGESA... AND HE IS YOUR GREATEST FAN.
I SPEAK ON BEHALF OF THAT MAN...
I COME IN HIS STEAD, TO RESCUE YOU.
BENIBANA, YOUR DEATH WOULD CAUSE TOMEO DEEP ANGUISH.

TIME TO WAKE UP NOW.

I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
I'M HAPPY FOR YOU, MR. KAGESA ...
SHE MUST HAVE UNDERSTOOD THE DEPTH OF MY LOVE FOR HER!
MUNCH
IT WAS JUST LIKE A DREAM.
BENI-BANA... SHE! I!
...NOW YOU WON'T HAVE THAT NIGHTMARE ANYMORE.
IT WAS A DREAM.
THIS TIME IT'LL BE THE SAME FANTASTIC SCENE OVER AND OVER AGAIN! I OWE YOU SO MUCH, HIRUKO.
INSTEAD WE CAN OPEN THE CURTAIN ON OUR FAIRY-TALE LOVE STORY!
Ah...

LATER!
WELL, I'LL MAKE SURE THAT I HAVE A NICE DREAM FOR YOU!
BOLT
CURR CURR
BUT I GUESS NO ONE LOVES A BAKU, HUH?
SWIPE
THAT'S A DAMNED SHAME!
HA HA HA HA
HOW DULL FOR YOU! YOU SHOULD FALL IN LOVE TOO!
I DON'T REQUIRE THANKS, ONLY SUSTENANCE ...
IT'S THE MOST AMAZING THING IN THE WORLD!
SHOOF
SHOOF
...He was nice.
...to you, maybe.
SLAM
WE INTERRUPT THIS BROADCAST TO BRING YOU BREAKING NEWS!
UGH
HUH?
Peace and quiet, at last.

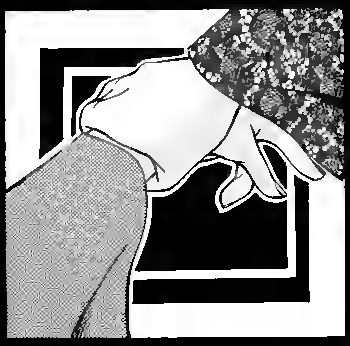
PASSERSBY DISCOVERED THE BODIES OF A YOUNG MAN AND WOMAN.
EARLY THIS MORNING, NEAR THE BASE OF DARKNESS FALLS...
No way...
THE BODIES WERE IDENTIFIED AS THOSE OF STARLET BENIBANA MAKINO AND IDOL HIKONOJO KAYAMA.
IT IS BEING SPECULATED THAT, AFTER FAILING TO RECEIVE ADEQUATE SUPPORT FROM THEIR CO-WORKERS AND FRIENDS, THE TWO STARS MODELED THEIR SUICIDE ON THAT VERY FILM.
RUMORS SUGGESTED THAT THE TWO WERE INVOLVED IN A SECRET LOVE AFFAIR. DARKNESS FALLS, WHERE THE BODIES WERE DISCOVERED, WAS A LOCATION WHERE THEY FILMED THEIR LATEST PICTURE TOGETHER.


SCOOT SCOOT
SHE'S ACCEPTED MY LOVE FOR HER..
I CAN'T WAIT FOR TONIGHT'S DREAM! ♡

HEE HEE!

POOF

I'M COMING, BENIBANA...
ZZZ
ZZZ
SNUGGLE
SNUGGLE



NEWS-
FLASH!

...
THERE HAVE BEEN SOME RECENT UPDATES ON THE CASE!
REGARDING OUR REPORT A FEW DAYS AGO ON THE DEATHS OF BENIBANA MAKINO AND HIKONOJO KAYAMA...

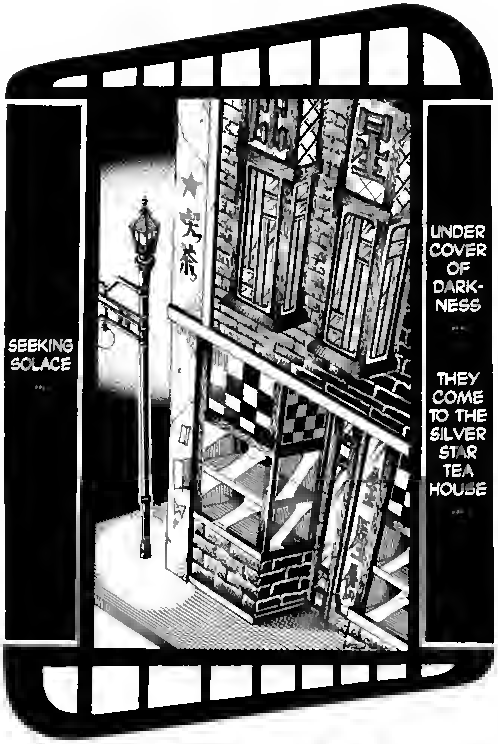
THEIR DEATHS WERE AT FIRST REPORTED TO BE THE RESULT OF A SUICIDE PACT...

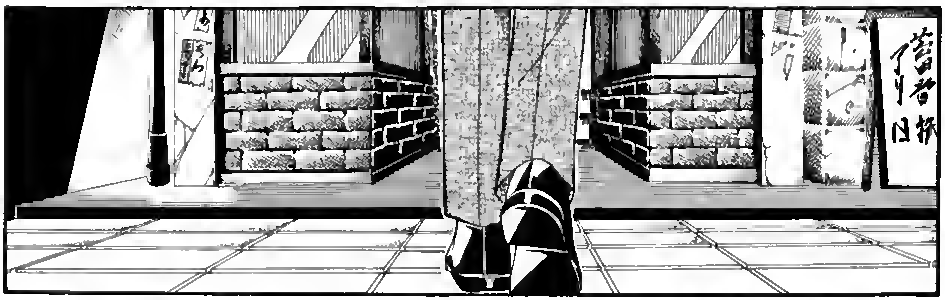
HOWEVER, THE DISCOVERY OF MR. KAYAMA'S DIARY AT HIS RESIDENCE HAS MADE IT APPARENT THAT MISS MAKINO MANIPULATED HIM TO HIS DEATH.

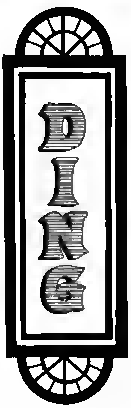
March 28th
That woman is despicable. She's played so many different personalities in her career that she's lost sight of her own. "I can't find myself no matter where I look," she says. "What I used to call myself is dead. How can I keep going, and for whom?" She believes her salvation is in reuniting the physical and mental, and in order to do so, her physical body must die, too.
Despite this, I cannot bring myself to leave her... And I do not wish to make her feelings public... Our relationship

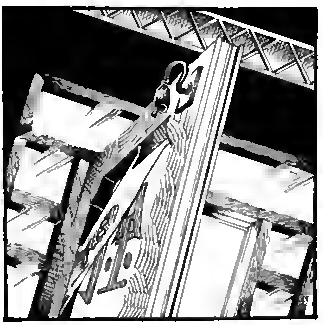
ACCORDING TO MR. KAYAMA'S JOURNAL...
MISS MAKINO WAS GOING TO KILL HERSELF.
SADLY, MISS MAKINO HELD GREAT SWAY WITH HER ADMIRERS...
...AND SHE ENCOURAGED THEM TO DO THE SAME.

THE SEVENTH NIGHT: FACING MIRRORS (PART ONE)









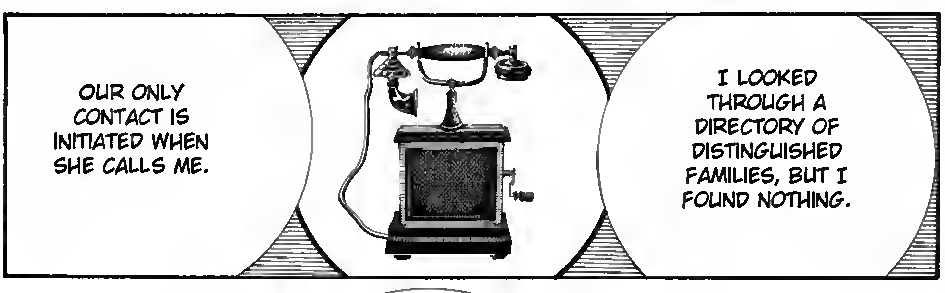
I UNDERSTAND THAT THERE IS A BAKU IN RESIDENCE HERE...?
AH, YES. HE'S OVER THERE.
WHAT A CHARMING YOUNG MAN...
HIRUKO, I PRESUME?

I AM YOSHINORI NANJO.
I SEEK YOUR HELP WITH A NIGHTMARE.
I ONLY ASK THAT I BE ALLOWED TO CONSUME THE NIGHTMARE. PLEASE, DO GO ON...
I CAN PAY YOU, WHATEVER YOUR FEE.
VERY WELL.
EVERY NIGHT A WOMAN CALLS ME AT MY HOME.
OH, WOW!
I'M SORRY. IT'S JUST... YOU HAVE A PHONE IN YOUR HOME?
YOU MUST COME FROM A PROSPEROUS FAMILY, MR. YOSHINORI.

WE HAVE SO MUCH IN COMMON, THIS WOMAN AND I...
SO MUCH SO THAT I REJECTED ALL THE POTENTIAL MARRIAGE PROSPECTS THAT MY PARENTS ARRANGED.
OVER THE COURSE OF A VERY FEW PHONE CALLS, I FOUND MYSELF... FALLING FOR THIS WOMAN.
THE WOMAN TOO, IT WOULD SEEM. LIKE MYSELF, I SUSPECT SHE IS NOBILITY...
Nobility?!
SHE IS FROM A GOOD FAMILY, AT THE VERY LEAST.
AND HIDDEN BENEATH HER SOFT TONES, I DETECT A PASSIONATE PERSONALITY.
SHE, TOO, IS FROM A REGAL BLOODLINE.
JUST FROM THE SOUND OF HER VOICE, I CAN IMAGINE HOW REFINED AND LOVELY SHE MUST BE...
SHE IS MY... IDEAL.

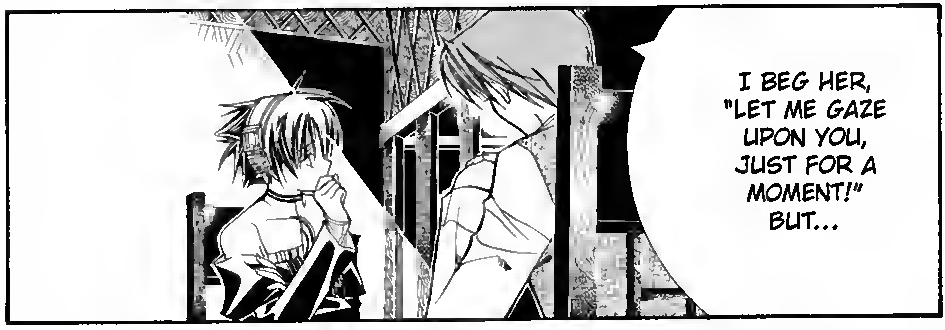
I'VE YET TO MEET HER IN PERSON.
THIS IS PURE CONJECTURE.
WELL ...
...

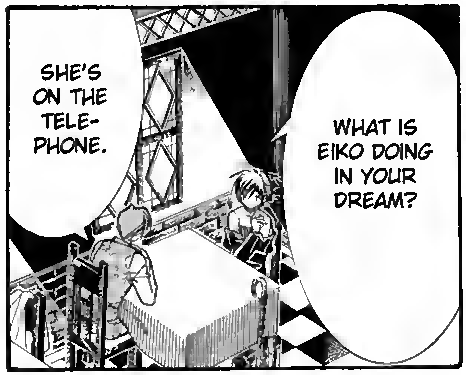
I KNOW ONLY THAT HER NAME IS EIKO HOJO, AND NOTHING MORE.
EVERY TIME I TRY TO ARRANGE IT, SHE FINDS A REASON TO TURN ME DOWN.


OUR ONLY CONTACT IS INITIATED WHEN SHE CALLS ME.
I LOOKED THROUGH A DIRECTORY OF DISTINGUISHED FAMILIES, BUT I FOUND NOTHING.

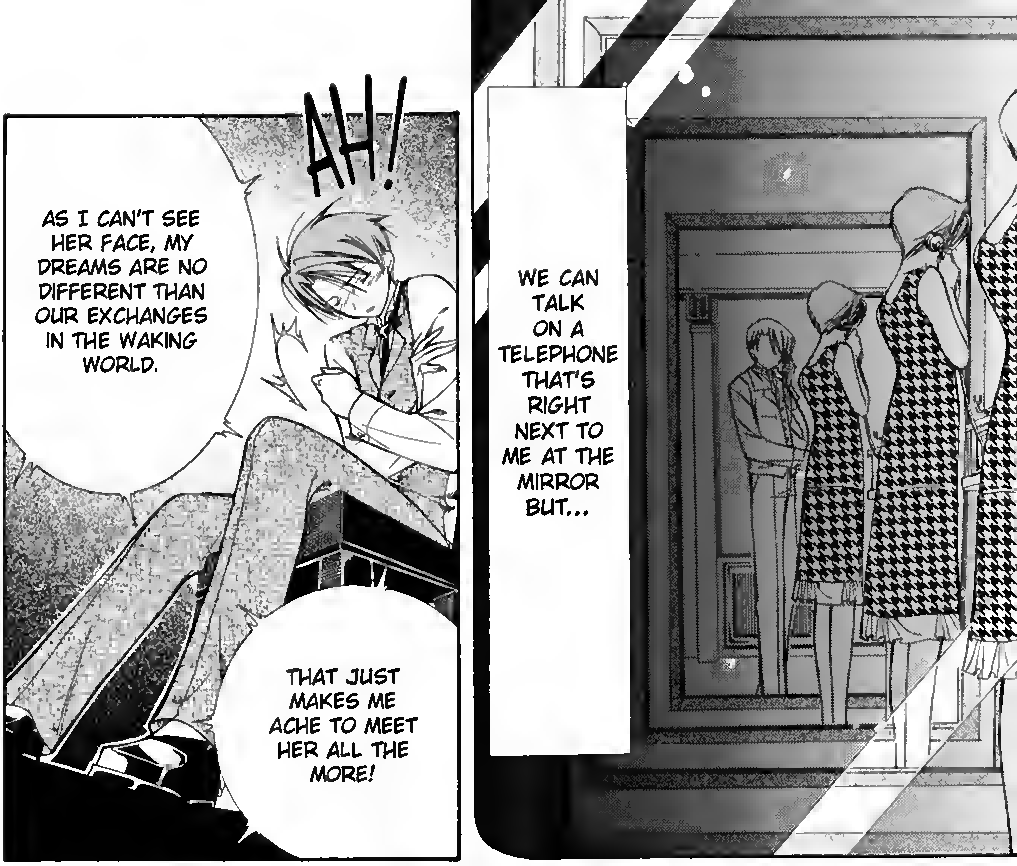
MY DESIRE TO MEET HER GROWS STRONGER DAY BY DAY... AND NOW I'VE STARTED TO HAVE THESE NIGHTMARES...

IN MY DREAM THERE IS A LARGE MIRROR THAT REFLECTS ANOTHER MIRROR. IN EACH SUBSEQUENT REFLECTION THERE IS A WOMAN. THAT WOMAN IS EIKO HOJO.
HER BACK IS ALWAYS TO ME AND I CAN'T SEE HER FACE...


I BEG HER, "LET ME GAZE UPON YOU, JUST FOR A MOMENT!" BUT...


WHAT IS EIKO DOING IN YOUR DREAM?
SHE'S ON THE TELE-PHONE.

FACING MIRRORS... A WOMAN WITH HER BACK TO HIM...


AH!
AS I CAN'T SEE HER FACE, MY DREAMS ARE NO DIFFERENT THAN OUR EXCHANGES IN THE WAKING WORLD.
THAT JUST MAKES ME ACHE TO MEET HER ALL THE MORE!
WE CAN TALK ON A TELEPHONE THAT'S RIGHT NEXT TO ME AT THE MIRROR BUT...

I WONDER, YOSHINORI, ISN'T THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU FIND STRANGE?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
I CAN DO THAT FOR YOU.
SCOOT
HIRUKO, CAN YOU HELP ME SEE EIKO'S FACE?
EVEN IF I'M FORBIDDEN TO SEE HER IN REALITY, IT MUST BE POSSIBLE IN THE WORLD OF DREAMS.

TMP TMP TMP
THE EXISTENCE OF THE OTHER MIRROR.

BUT YOU ONLY DESCRIBED ONE...

YOU JUST SAID THAT IN THE MIRROR WAS THE REFLECTION OF ANOTHER MIRROR. SO THERE MUST BE TWO MIRRORS...

SO...
WHERE IS THE OTHER MIRROR?

FOOSH
...
SLEEP NOW... LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.

EIKO, WILL WE MEET TONIGHT AT LAST?

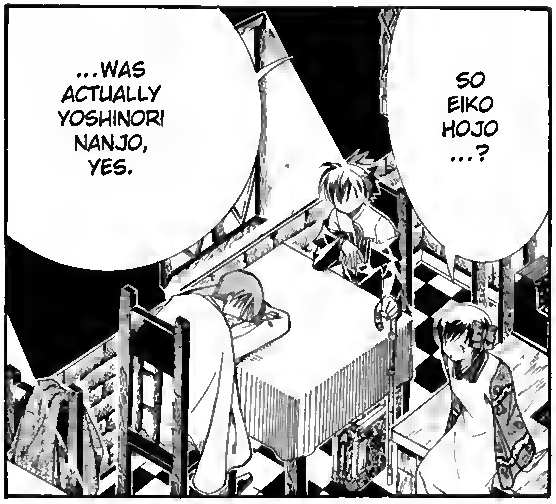
No other mirror...
AH
WHAT IS... THAT?
PLEASE HIRUKO...
...
CLATCH

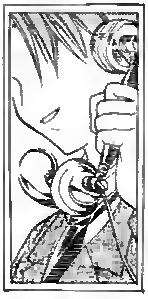
CLATCH
SLASH
CRACK
CRACK
CRACK
Hiruko!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

I HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR THIS DAY FOR SO LONG...
AT LAST!
EI...
EIKO ...
LIFT YOUR HEAD. SHOW ME YOUR FACE...
YES... THIS IS...
EIKO!

THIS IS JUST THE FACE I IMAGINED!
MY IDEAL!
YOU TOO, YOSHI-NORI...
SUCH A BEAUTIFUL FACE...
YOU ARE MY IDEAL, TOO.

FLASH
TAKE YOUR TIME...
HIRUKO, MAY WE HAVE A MOMENT?
HEE HEE
Oh my, yes!
I BELIEVE THIS MEANS THE DREAM IS OVER. I'LL BE TAKING MY LEAVE...
GLANCE





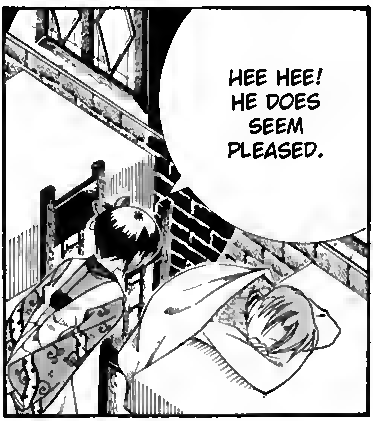
HE WAS TALKING TO ***HIMSELF*** WITH THE TELEPHONE IN HIS HAND.

EIKO WAS A PRODUCT OF HIS DELUSION. YOSHINORI WAS NEVER TALKING TO ***ANYONE*** ON THE PHONE...

THE OTHER MIRROR WAS... HIMSELF?
SO THE SECOND MIRROR IN HIS DREAM...
BUT AS A REFLECTION OF HIS HEART, THE FURTHER BACK YOU LOOK, THE CLOSER YOU GET TO HIS TRUE FEELINGS.
YES. THE MIRROR REFLECTED YOSHINORI'S HEART, AND THUS IT REFLECTED THE PERSON THAT HE LOVED MOST... HIMSELF. IT WAS A SYMBOL OF HIS NARCISSISM. THE GIRL WAS FACING AWAY BECAUSE HE HAD NOT REALIZED HIS OWN VANITY. THE IMAGE OF EIKO EXTENDED SO FAR BACK BECAUSE IT REFLECTED THE DEPTH OF HIS CONDITION.
IF THAT'S SO, THEN THE FURTHEST FACE AWAY...
...

SO THE LOVERS WERE UNITED ONCE THE MIRROR WAS BROKEN, YES?

IT'S MORNING... I WONDER IF HE'LL WAKE UP ON HIS OWN.
I'LL WAKE HIM.


HEE HEE! HE DOES SEEM PLEASED.

AND ...

SHUN
SHUN
YOSHI-NORI. IT'S MORNING ...
YOSHI-NORI ...

EIKO HOJO DOES AS WELL.

EXCUSE ME...
WHO COULD THAT BE, THIS EARLY?
MY NAME IS EIKO HOJO...

NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR 1: END

あとがき

AFTERWORD

Hello, everybody, this is Shin Mashiba. First, I want to thank you for buying this book. Thank you from the bottom of my heart! I didn't have any experience with serialization before this project and I'd be remiss if I didn't also thank my gracious editor who kindly directed me when I had no idea what I was doing. And finally, I offer a very special thanks to all the readers who have followed my young career from the start.

I really enjoyed drawing the backgrounds to Nightmare Inspector. Really, my only regret about the book thus far is that name of the waitress at the Silver Star Tea House is never mentioned. Well, that and the fact that there is no conclusion to chapter seven just yet...

Wanwan Shiroi has been such a great help to me, that I asked him to do a guest feature in this volume. It's like he's drunk some magic potion that makes it all seem real.

★初代担当様
Chief Editor
三代目 俳人、松下正孝様
The poet, Masataka Matsushita
三代目 佐伯有希様
Yuki Saeki
★アシスト 白井わんわん様
Assistant: Wanwan Shiroi
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Takecchi
★情報担当 MOAI様
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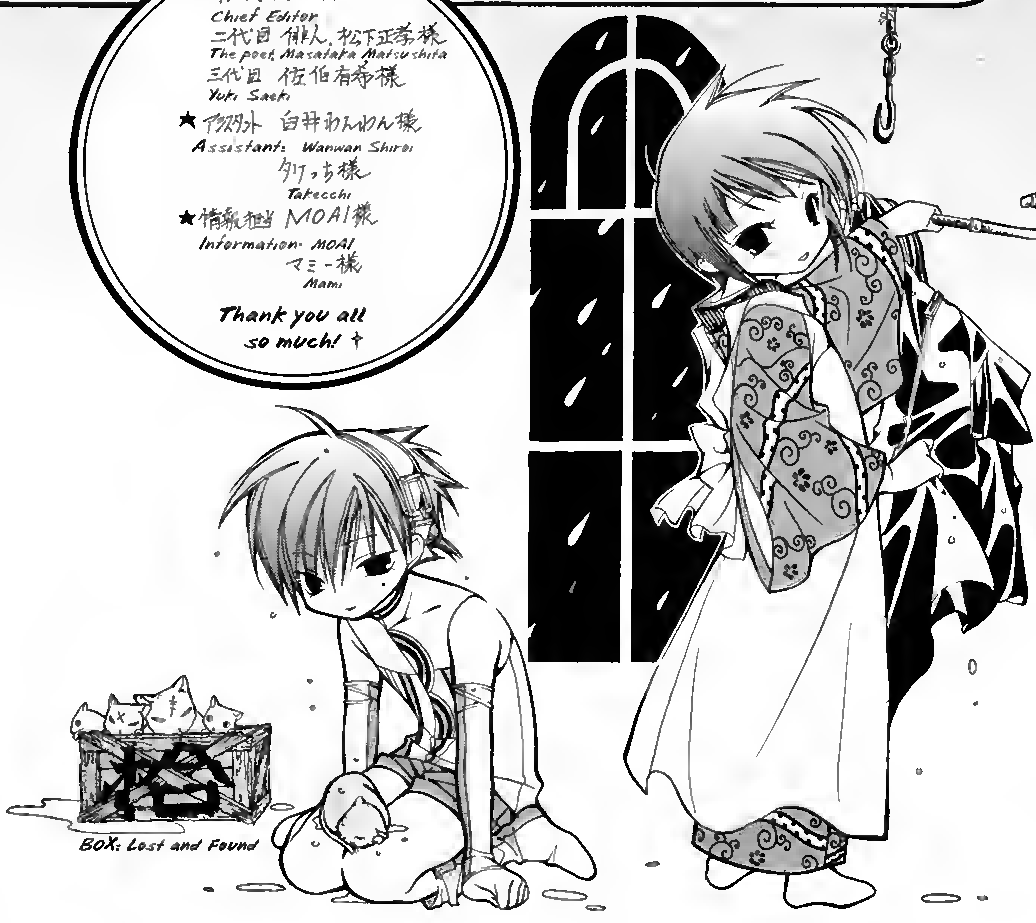
マミー様
Mami

Thank you all so much! ✝



夢食門

NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR

I'm very proud of myself for this logo

SUPER POPULAR! GREAT ROMANTIC HORROR... ♥

Lately I haven't been able to write horror, and it's made me sad.

SHIN MASHIBA's friend, Wanwan Shiroi.

Congratulations to Mr. Shin Mashiba (Ha!) on the publication of his first book.

I wonder if I'm able to do this moment justice?

It is a real honor to be a part of this project. I thought I might share the thoughts I had had while helping Mr. Mashiba put together his first draft. Okay! I bet you're all curious about Kenbun-kun's (I like to call him Kenbun-kun) THING, huh? ☆

THIS THING. Its formal name is Formalin* (56 years old)
Its name has changed through the ages:

Formalin → Formalun → Formalon

(*THE COMMERCIAL NAME FOR FORMALDEHYDE WHEN IT'S AQUEOUS.)

wood wool

Its life is fragile so it's held in tight. Looks painful!

Formalin's life source. Careful! If you remove this, it'll die!

Secret Grip (?)

When Kenbun-kun is hungry it goes into action! Whether in the mountains or at the sea (and, obviously, in dreams) if there is disaster, this can handle it. ♥

OH NO!

That's what will happen?!

opens up

POP

Soda comes out!

WAAAH!

Twenty cans worth

Secret stomach☆

There's lots of soda in its belly!
Don't worry, its all drinkable!☆

DELICIOUS!

GULP

Kenbun-kun says...

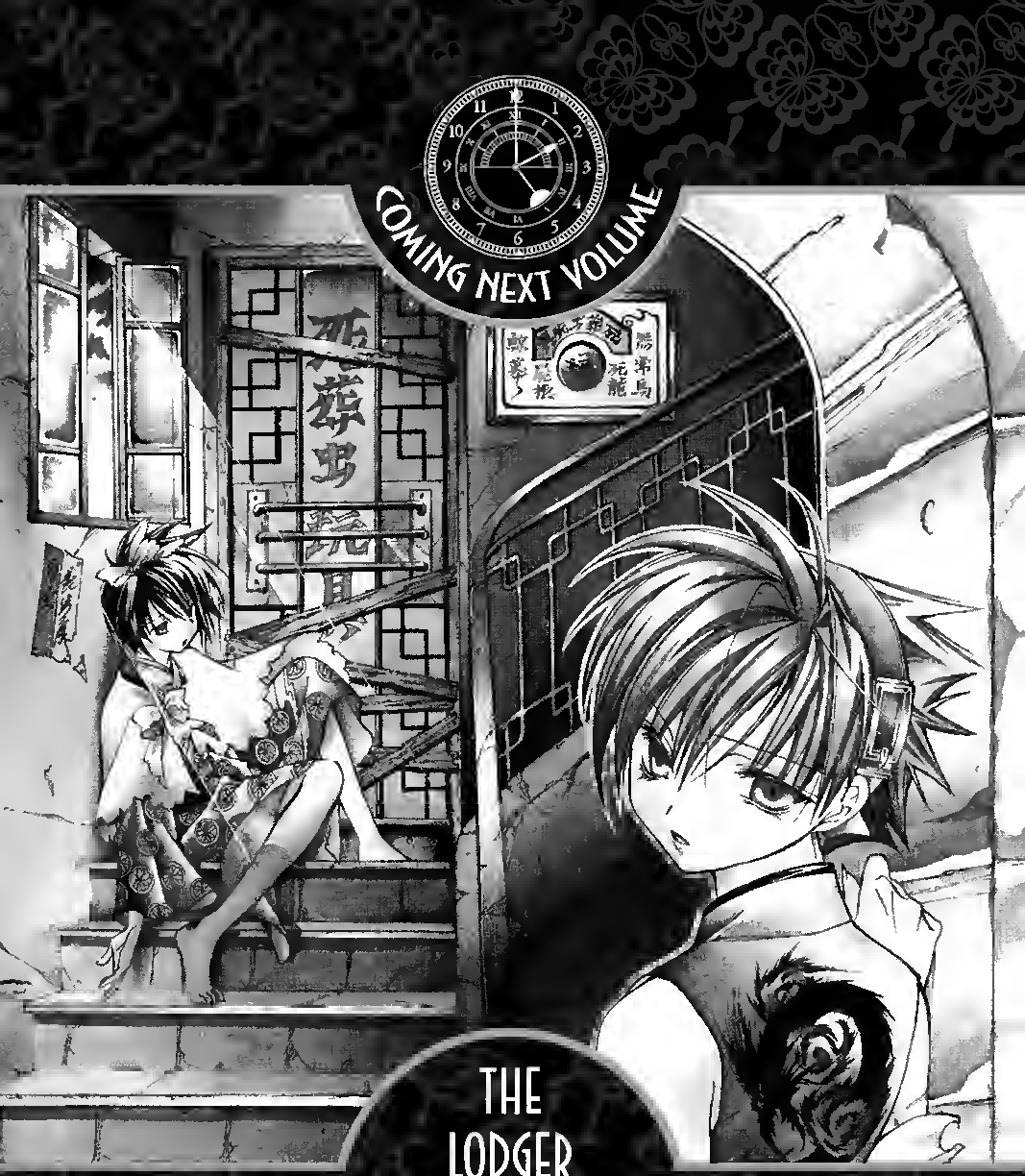
On quiet nights, I listen to the carbonation bubbles and don't feel quite so alone. The bubbles keep me company.

Now you can inspect nightmares, too.

There is soda in here, too! It's not a flavor he likes, though, so he doesn't drink it very often.

Next I will enlighten you about another curiosity... Glycerin. (More secrets!)

Where authors run to, seeking salvation
This the Silver Star Tea House
Do something please
Help me.
SCREE
SCREE
Isn't your deadline today? Are you going to make it?
←Not on time.
I'VE COME FOR THE SCRIPT.
OH NO!
←Second Editor Matsushita-san
DING
燐子
[FLASHLIGHT]
Nice!
SNORE—
Now, sleep. Leave reality behind.
[ATTACK BY LIGHT]

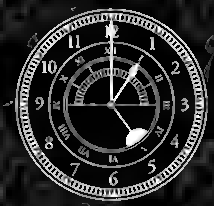


THE LODGER

Dreams on the menu this volume: a telephone operator who may be the girl of another patron's dreams, a girl without sight whose hearing is driving her mad, a missing fiancé who may be trapped in his own painting, and a mysterious lodger intent on discovering Hiruko's private past.

SHIN MASHIBA

I'm very nervous about my first book. When I was drawing this manga I was wondering about how a nightmare might taste exactly. I suppose because you see a dream inside your head, maybe it would taste like brains?



Shin Mashiba's first manga, *Yumekui Kenbun* (Nightmare Inspector), premiered in *Monthly Stencile*, a shojo magazine, in December 2001 and was then serialized in *Monthly G Fantasy* from 2003 to 2007. Mashiba-san's own nightmares include being forced to eat 50 living slugs and being chased by time.

NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR: YUMEKUI KENBUN ①

Shin Mashiba

Translation: Gemma Collinge

English Adaptation: Kelly Sue DeConnick
Touch-up Art & Lettering: James Gaubatz

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

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